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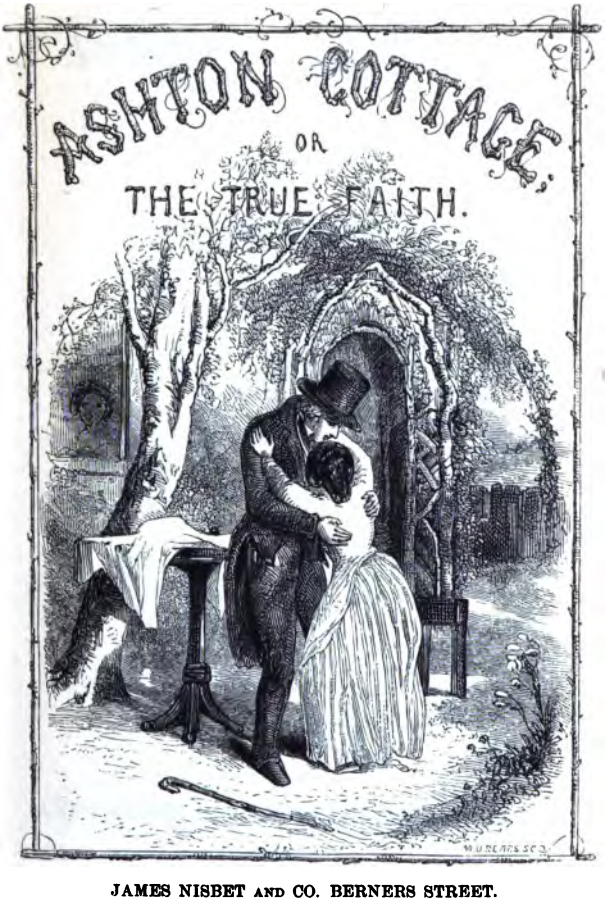

JAMES NISBET AND CO. BERNERS STREET.

ASHTON COTTAGE;

OR,

THE TRUE FAITH.

A Sunday Tale.

"Lay hold on eternal life."—1 *Timothy*, vi. 12.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET AND CO. 21 BERNERS STREET.
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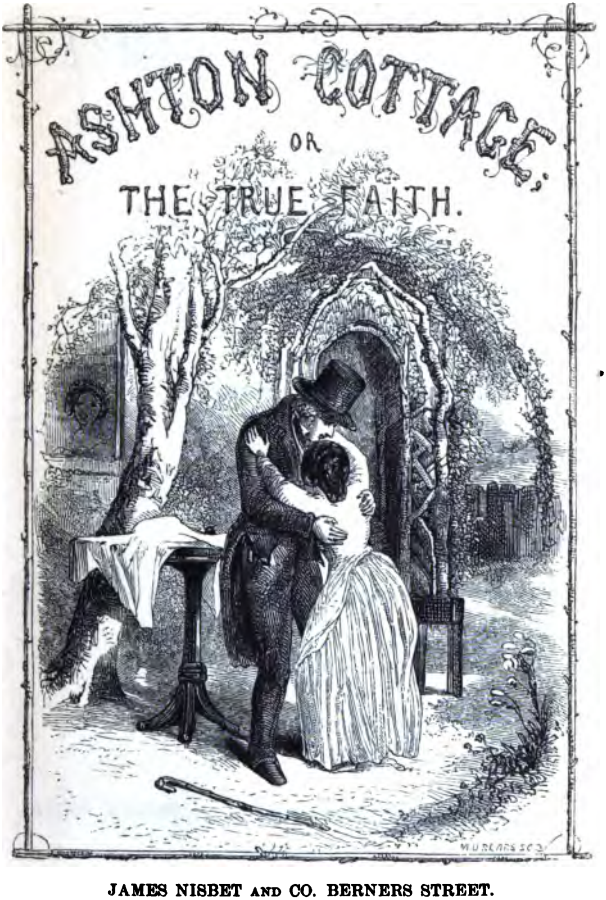


JAMES NISBET AND CO. BERNERS STREET.

"Well, Mary," she said, to the modest-looking girl who met her, "you are late, I think, for Saturday; it must be after four o'clock."

"Oh, no, grandmother!" returned the child, "I'm earlier than usual; Miss Banks is not well, so we had no class, and after dinner she said we had better all have a walk together, as it is my birthday—you know I am fourteen to-day—but when I had gone a good way with them I turned back, for I wanted so much to see my uncle that I could not enjoy my walk. Is he come?"

"Yes, Mary," replied Mrs. Walton, "he is come; but I have something to say to you before you see him;" and putting her arm over her shoulder, they walked down the quiet lane together. "Your uncle is come, indeed, and he wishes me to take his daughter to live with us for three months; but what do you think it is for? That she may learn that a life of usefulness is a happy life when people love the Lord and his service. Now do you think we can prove this to her? may I depend on your helping me to make Janet happy by being cheerful yourself? or had we better put off the visit till I can feel sure my Mary is truly a sheep chosen by the Good Shepherd?"

"Oh, no, grandmother, do let her come now," said Mary, with all a girl's enthusiasm; "I will try not to disappoint you. I'm sure I am very, very happy, so do let her come now."

"Perhaps it will be best," Mrs. Walton added,

slowly, "as your uncle has proposed the time; we must look to the Lord for his blessing, for without that nothing can come right. And now, Mary," she continued, turning towards the cottage, "we must go to your uncle."

James Walton was waiting for them, and soon read in the bright face of his niece the answer to his request; for she could not, though she was by nature a quiet and reserved girl, keep to herself her joy at the expected event.

"Come, Mary," said her grandmother, "we must have tea directly; your uncle goes back by the mail at seven to-night, so be quick, child."

But Mary could not be quick, she felt so nervous; she had, besides, many questions to ask about Janet: she could think of nothing but her, and wondered who she was like, and why her uncle James looked so serious.

And James Walton might well look serious. He had married unsuitably, and saw his girl acquiring bad habits; although his sons, being immediately under his own control, were diligent and dutiful, he had many sad thoughts for Janet, his eldest daughter (the youngest being yet quite a child). He had, therefore, come over to his mother, as a last resource, to entreat she would receive her, hoping the example of quiet happiness might be blessed; forgetful of poor Mary, who was thus to be brought into contact with so much evil. But who can arrest the course of bad training, or count the cost of bad

influence? It was dangerous ground, and, perhaps, a longer time for consideration might have suggested the wisdom of avoiding it. It is, however, the privilege of the Lord's children that they have only to decide on the path of duty—which in this case seemed plain—and in simple faith commit the consequences to God, who can bring light out of darkness, and overrule evil for good.

The mail passed through the quiet village of H—— that night, and took James Walton away from Ashton Cottage, leaving its inmates in a state of unusual excitement.

Mary scarcely knew what she was doing, but managed to put by the tea-things without breaking any of them, and took down her Bible to prepare her Sunday lessons. After that was done she got to her sewing by the side of her grandmother, who had been lost in thought for nearly an hour.

There are some persons to whom it is difficult to assign a station, and of this class was Nancy Walton. She was neither high nor low, rich nor poor, and yet she did not belong to what is called the middle class of society; but it was well for her that she sought not so much to fix a station for herself as to discover her calling, and having found it, to perform its duties. Ready for every good word and work, she was respected by all and loved by many; and though intimate with but few, no one in trouble feared to be turned away unaided by her judicious kindness or faithful counsel. Her face must once have been a

lovely one, now its beauty was shrouded by age and the traces of many cares. She had married when not very young, preferring to remain with an aged mother at liberty to wait upon her. They were placed just above the need for labour, as Nancy's father had lived carefully, and his small farm had prospered so as to enable him to lay by sufficient to admit of his retiring from business at the age of fifty. He had bought Ashton Cottage, which, when his widow died, became the property of their only daughter, who now no longer refused the hand of her faithful friend, James Walton, whose economical habits had likewise placed him in comfortable circumstances. So Nancy married, and seemed settling down for domestic bliss; but how quickly are the brightest earthly pictures dimmed, for, soon after the birth of her two sons, her worthy husband was called to enter the rest which remains for the people of God, and they were left for her to rear. This she had done well; but she could not keep them altogether from the evil there is in the world. The eldest married his cousin, whom he had long loved, and she died soon after the birth of her first child. Her husband, distracted with sorrow, left the country, hoping that change of scene might mitigate the bitterness of his grief, leaving his infant daughter to his mother's tender care. Seldom had she heard from this son; but when any excitement arose in the village and reached so far as Ashton Cottage, it was but too plain she looked for his return, until the explanation came that nothing

half so eventful had occurred. So she would settle down again in humble patience, her hopes, nevertheless, but little diminished.

James, the youngest, and the namesake of his father, married also, but he had chosen without counting the cost; attracted by external beauty, and forgetting how little such a trifle can add to connubial happiness, he thoughtlessly placed himself in a situation sure to entail trouble and temptation, instead of denying himself the dangerous treasure which a short time would have recovered him from. He did not, however, do as many who bring troubles on themselves, and then call them providential dealings. His upright, honest mind knew well where the fault had been, and too late deeply deplored it, but all that was in his power he did to lessen the evils attendant on such circumstances. His wife was, indeed, a pretty woman, and of a sweet temper, but having lived as maid to a lady of fashion, she had imbibed too decided a taste for vanity and folly to make her a suitable companion for so sensible a man. How, then, should she be able to train their children, as her husband would have them educated, in the fear of the Lord and habits of usefulness? This want he tried in every possible way to remedy, but small is the influence of a father compared to that of a mother. His boys he had under his own eye, but who was to look after his precious daughters? Severity he knew well would only estrange them from him; so, with some indulgences and much good counsel

given in a gentle way—a way to prove his love and interest in the least circumstances which interested them—he succeeded in gaining their confidence and warm affection. Janet was the eldest, and Fanny the youngest child, and the two boys were between. Little Fanny, whose health was always delicate, early displayed a serious and reflective turn of mind; but with Janet it was just the reverse: like her mother, she longed to taste the tempting sweets of worldliness; she thought their home much too quiet, and in the hope that sometime she should know what there was beyond, she invested that beyond with all the false colours which people ignorant of the world always do.

Alas! how much might many spare themselves if they would wisely profit from the experience of others. Solomon tried everything, and pronounced each in turn to be "vanity and vexation of spirit." Then why should we persist in sowing to the flesh, the fruits of which are always bitter? Try what we may, we shall never find satisfaction in any mere earthly good; it can neither give us peace nor happiness, and will in the end "bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder." This James Walton knew by his own painful experience, and longed to save his daughter from a similar fate. Grievously distressed to see her heart yearning after the treasures of Egypt, he thought first of one plan, and then another, to turn her from pursuing a fleeting shadow, and fix her mind on some substantial object, and

had at last formed the project of sending her to his mother's peaceful dwelling, hoping she might learn from Mary that a life of cheerful duty is a pleasant one, and so become like her. To make this request was the object of his unusual and short visit to Ashton Cottage, which full of hope he left, to return to his affectionate though erring wife.

Mary did not venture to ask her grandmother any more questions about Janet, until she had finished her work and taken her Bible, as usual, to close the day with the reading of it; after which, Nancy Walton knelt down and poured forth her soul in prayer, when Mary began to feel it was a very serious subject, and earnestly resolved she would do her utmost that her cousin might gain from her visit to them. After prayers, many particulars were entered into, which even to one so young could be told; for she was naturally steady, and matured in character, through living with only one companion, who was so much above herself in every way; and Nancy felt her child worthy of the trust reposed in her.

Full one hour later than usual Mary laid down in her little bed that night, and one hour earlier next morning she awoke, wondering, as we often do after some great event, what it can be that is upon our half-awakened mind, and which we cannot all at once realize; but she quickly came to herself, and dressing, began the business of the day by reading the

chapter which came in turn, and which proved to be the second of Titus. When she came to the twelfth verse,—"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," she involuntarily paused, for here her heart reproached her; she felt she had been too anxious for a pleasure without thinking whether it might not prove a hindrance to her soul's welfare: so she prayed most earnestly that God would enable her to remember that "but one thing is needful," and to keep that one thing constantly before her; and she rose from her knees trustful and tranquil.

It was the Lord's day, and Mary had to prepare everything (for she delighted to save her grandmother from labour), and be at the Sunday-school by nine o'clock. She was one of Mrs. Herbert's pupils; and Mrs. Herbert was almost as great a blessing to the poor of the village as the rector, whose faithful ministry seemed to have changed a desert into a garden.

They sat down to breakfast; the open cottage door admitted the soft air of a summer's morning, loaded with the scent of sweet flowers. Mary felt very happy as her grandmother spoke of all their blessings and the Lord's great mercies; for Nancy Walton loved God and his service from her inmost soul, and was so filled with grace and true Christian kindness, that none could be in her company without feeling a glow of pleasure as she

warmed their hearts by her benevolent smiles and genuine cheerfulness.

The morning sermon was from the text, "The Lord will give grace and glory." How well suited did that widow feel it to her circumstances, as, closing her eyes, she drank in, "like fresh water to a thirsty soul," all those exceeding great and precious promises which are appointed as helps by the way. Grace to walk the path before her, and glory at the end—this was all she needed, and all she wanted; and afresh committing her way to the Lord, she left the church strengthened and comforted; for "when the Lord giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

That Sunday evening they took their seats into the garden, and sat out together until sunset, singing hymns, reading and talking—for Mrs. Walton was preparing her child for the coming event;—but all arrangements were left for the next day.

On Tuesday, however, when the preparations were nearly completed, a letter came from C——, saying, that Mrs. James Walton's sister had come unexpectedly to her brother-in-law's house with the intention of remaining three months with them, and kindly proposed, as she was an accomplished milliner and dressmaker, giving instructions to Janet in these departments; and as her mother gladly seized this opportunity, the promised visit was deferred for that length of time, greatly to her watchful father's disappointment.

"So, Mary," said Nancy, when both had read the letter, "we shall not have your cousin here for three months. Well, we shall have plenty of time to make her new bed-curtains, and you can knit her a pin-cushion, and make her a book-marker for her Bible. I have got two new Bibles: I meant one for you—a birthday present; but I did not give it you on Saturday, as I thought you had better wait, and you and Janet can begin to read them together, which will be a nice plan, won't it?"

Mary was much pleased with the plan, but could not conceal the tears of natural sorrow which flowed when she heard she must wait so long to see her cousin; but she brightened up again, and turning to her grandmother, said,—

"I'm glad it will be winter, for some things; we shall have such nice long evenings with you. But what shall we do in the day? Will Janet go to school with me? I hope she may."

"Not just at first, my love," returned her grandmother; "I must keep her with me a few days, at least."

Another shade of disappointment passed over Mary's face; but she had had too many proofs of this kind parent's willingness to indulge her wishes to doubt that what she did she had good reason for doing, and that it was for the best.

Nancy Walton knew well that to have the confidence of her grandchild she must repose trust in her; this is the secret of mutual dependence and

reciprocal feeling between parents and children. It is most important for the well-being of parents and children that there should be perfect confidence and openness on the part of one towards the other. Let none, therefore, blame those parents who, in order to effect this desirable end, act with such condescension towards their offspring as is most likely to secure it, if at the same time they preserve that equality of temper and demeanour which always ensures respect. On the other hand, children cannot be too cautious in confiding their troubles and annoyances to others than those who certainly have the first right to sympathize, advise, or rejoice with them.

But this good and wise mother accustomed Mary to enter into all her own plans, as well as to express her thoughts on every fresh circumstance; and this, while it gave her the opportunity of showing the child her mistakes, initiated her into a careful way of reasoning on all subjects within their limited sphere, as it laid her grandmother's well-kept mind open before her. How very much depends on education; not so much the art of writing and reading, as the moral training and moral influence, and acting out the principle that "example is better than precept!" Wise, indeed, was the counsel Mary received how to act in the events which awaited her.

"Above all things," her grandmother would say, —"above all things, recommend religion by your own habitual cheerfulness. Christians are the only

people with a solid ground for happiness. Christ bore all the load for us that we might go free and unburdened, and nothing remains for us but to give thanks and rejoice in so full and free a salvation, showing to others by gladness of heart and life that we have found the pearl of great price, and having in possession so great a good are content therewith, and see pleasure only in the reasonable service of Jesus our Master."

And happy, in truth, Mary was,—happier far than most children, though not exempt from the trials which are common to all. Was she, then, "a child of God, an heir of heaven?" or was she only *almost* a Christian? It must be remembered, in answering this important question, that with those whose lot is fair and smooth decision is sometimes a harder thing than with those who, surrounded by evil and trouble, cannot conceal from themselves their own wretched condition and perpetual danger; this truth being made manifest, they flee to the refuge, and are freed from their former bondage, while those who are guarded and shielded become more easy in their minds, and in a measure ignorant of the utter depravity of all human nature. This was Mary's case. Salvation was to her a truly interesting theme, and the name of Christ was precious; but knowing little of the hidden evil of her heart, she was, comparatively, a stranger to the exceeding value of the mercy-seat, and the unspeakable relief and privilege of prayer. Her religion was

more of fact than feeling, and it should be both; still she was "a child of God, an heir of heaven," and had, therefore, much to learn, and one of these lessons her cousin's visit will be the means of teaching her.

So the summer passed away, and autumn came spreading its thick carpets of withered leaves around them; and Nancy Walton and her grandchild had settled down again into their accustomed quiet life.

Chapter the Second.

AT length November came, though it seemed long on its way; and one dark, stormy night, the fire blazing more brightly than usual on the hearth at Ashton Cottage, the tea-things all ready set, and the looks of expectation on the faces of the inmates, betokened that some guest might arrive any moment. Mary was almost beside herself; she had only met her cousin once before, when both were eight years old, and six years at

that time of life make great changes, so she scarcely knew what to picture to herself.

In one part of the cottage, divided from that which the Waltons inhabited, lived Michael and Peggy James. The latter came in daily to do the rough work (except on Sundays), whilst her husband took care of the little garden in his leisure hours, made himself useful in many ways, and this evening he had been despatched to meet Janet.

The sound of voices from without gave warning of their approach ; Nancy Walton threw open the door and welcomed her grandchild to her abode by many a kind embrace. Mary was not behind in manifestations of pleasure, whilst Michael and Peggy carried Janet's box up-stairs, and uncorded it in the pretty bed-room, the neat aspect of which, with its two white beds, greatly delighted Janet.

They soon sat down to tea, no one looking happier than the young visitor. She was scarcely able to eat for joy, until reminded by her grandmother that after so long a journey she must need refreshment, both in the way of food and rest.

"So now," she added, "as we have plenty of time before us for saying all we have to say, you must let me see you enjoy your tea, for I should not like you to be overdone the first thing."

Many an admiring look did Mary cast upon her cousin, and wondered her uncle had never told her how beautiful she was. Then the thought crossed

her mind,—Perhaps he did not think it of so much importance as being good?

As for Janet, she had heard so much of the true piety of her grandparent that she was rather guarded that evening before her; but Mary was a girl, and that was enough, so she longed to be in their room again, and give full vent to her tongue. Nancy helped them to arrange the drawers neatly, and when that was finished, and they had enjoyed an hour round the warm fire, the Bible and hymn-book were taken down for their accustomed little services. When the books were closed, the usual fervent prayer was offered—more urgent even than common; it was indeed a casting of all care upon the Lord as One who cared for them,—the Disposer of events, and the Author of every perfect gift.

"Now, dear girls," said Mrs. Walton, "don't talk very much to-night, remember you have not to part to-morrow; so try to get a good night, for you will both be better for it after a day of such excitement."

Did Mrs. Walton, too, retire to rest earlier than usual that night? No, indeed. She remained by the fire, with her Bible open before her, occasionally making a verse her own out of that precious volume; holding communion with the Lord her Saviour, and making requests with joy. And above her many petitions one rose paramount, that another lamb might be added to the fold of the Good Shepherd, that she might have the delight of return-

ing Janet to her father's house "a new creature, born from above, turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

But no sooner were the cousins up-stairs than all Janet's caution fled, and she quickly poured out a multitude of questions, the purport of which will be easily guessed. These Mary for some time continued to answer with many a smile, until remembering the injunction they received, she turned to her companion and said kindly,—

"Now, Janet, we won't say any more to-night. We must obey our orders."

"Oh, she only meant it for our good," Janet replied, "and I'm not one bit sleepy."

"But I always find," returned Mary, "her orders are for my good; and they will be for yours, too, I'm sure of that."

"But tell me," said Janet, "are you happy to be kept so strict? Father says you are very happy."

"Happy!" answered Mary; "yes, indeed, I am; but one thing I know, my happiness would be gone directly, if I disobeyed grandmother. I only wish I loved the service of God as I love hers."

"Well, father is quite right," said Janet; "you are a good girl; I never could be as good as you, and I know he has sent me here to learn to be like you, but I'm afraid he will be disappointed."

"It is like grandmother," Mary quickly replied, "and not me, he wants you to be, Janet. You don't know me yet: I feel so wicked this very night."

"Oh, nonsense, Mary!" returned her cousin. "Where is the use of saying so? I should be quite content if I were as good as you."

But Mary was right, she did feel wicked, for already the seeds of discontent and jealousy, sown in her heart by the ever-watchful enemy, had sprung up. Now she saw and felt them fully, and, instead of spending a longer time on her knees to empty her soul full of temptations, she rose when her cousin's short prayer was finished and got into bed, the weight still on her conscience.

Nights pass quickly to those who sleep well; the storm was over, and the morning sun shone brightly into that little room, awaking its inmates from their first sleep. Mary was sorry to leave her cousin behind her, but she tried to go cheerfully to school, while Janet remained at home.

This arrangement Nancy had adopted in order to gain the opportunity of studying Janet's character, which she felt was the first step towards gaining influence over her; it was also likely to throw off all unnatural retsraint on the part of her grandchild towards her, and convince her that in such a parent she had found a friend as full of compassion as goodness; ready to enter into her weaknesses and faults in order to help her in gaining that self-control which is important to all, but especially to those impulsive minds who have not the strength to restrain their emotions, whether of joy or sorrow. Altogether she did not think her character one likely

to injure Mary, while she hoped Mary's steady firmness would be good for Janet; at the end of a week, therefore, she yielded to their earnest entreaties, and allowed them to go together to school.

Janet was soon a favourite amongst the girls, and seemed to poor Mary to take her place in their love. Besides, she had come from a gay city; and beauty has in itself too much power when not made disagreeable by pride, so that Janet was greatly overestimated by her companions.

There are so many hours of the day in which neither parents nor teachers are witnesses, by eye or ear, of the proceedings of their charge,—hours when good can be undone and evil done; that we may almost say morally children have more means of educating one another than those set over them. This makes it so important for young people to be careful in selecting and making friends of their companions; it would be well if all remembered their own great responsibility and the opportunities they have for injuring or benefiting those of their own age.

In this case, that sweet pretty girl tarnished the simplicity of the country girls around her; and though she did not find in Mary that weakness which she found so readily in most, her coming had been the means of rousing much evil which Mary had no idea dwelt in her heart.

But all this was an under-current; and as they were pretty punctual in returning home, Nancy's

fears were not especially awakened until one evening in December, when, later than usual, Mary rushed into the cottage alone and almost breathless with running, and, to her grandmother's quick question, "Where's Janet?" replied, "She is gone home with Sarah Jones. She would go, though Ellen Warner begged her not to go, over and over again. They fixed it over dinner" (for school being some distance, several of the girls took their dinner). "There was something particular about it, I'm sure, made Janet so determined to go; for I heard Sarah whisper to her, 'You know you will see it if you come, and then you can do as you like about it.' The Joneses were going to have a party to keep Sarah's birthday, but none of the school-girls were invited. She asked me not to tell you about the party, because it would vex you to think of Janet going to one, but I said I should tell you everything."

"It is the last place I would have had her to go to," exclaimed Nancy, her fears all the while increasing. "What can I do?"

"Ellen Warner," added Mary, "ran after me to beg I would tell you as quickly as I could, and to ask you to send Michael for her; she said, if you knew the Joneses, you would not like her to be there an hour. I begged of Ellen to come home with me, but she said it was quite impossible, so I ran off."

"So I will," said Nancy; and Michael was despatched to bring Janet home at once: though every

minute he was away seemed like an hour to that anxious widow.

And why could not Ellen Warner give a reason for not obliging Mary? Ah, there was the secret. She was too noble to account for her conduct, because she could not do so without implicating another. Her manners were so decided, the girls often wondered at themselves for loving her as they did, for they did indeed love her. She never gratified their curiosity, nor joined in their gossip; but she was faithful and kind to them; sorry when they were in trouble, and diligent in trying to turn them from their various transgressions before they should be detected and punishment overtake them. Older than the generality by about three years, she was often employed by Miss Banks as assistant, and even kept school alone if illness made her teacher unfit to do so. There is an old proverb, "Familiarity breeds contempt," so, perhaps, the ease with which Ellen could change places from pupil to mistress, might partly be attributed to the general reserve of her demeanour, which acted as a safeguard to her authority, which but few attempts were made to question, and those only by children of inferior minds; whilst her universal consideration and kindness would never have led to the suspicion that pride and a high spirit were her besetting sins. Then, how had she become what she was—almost as "wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove?"

Poor Ellen had all her life had one great affliction, and "learned by the things she had suffered." Early her gentle mother's prayers were answered; Ellen was received into the household of faith, and learned to look beyond this scene for a better and an enduring substance. They endured a daily martyrdom, lessened by their mutual sympathy, but heightened by having to see each other suffer. To prove beyond a doubt the extent of Adam's fall, how often have we to see whole families made miserable by one root of bitterness, which, springing up, troubles all; and this was the case here. To superficial observers correct and moral in his conduct, as men account morality, George Warner was a perfect stranger to the high morality of the Gospel, where "anger, wrath, and malice," are classed with what we call more deadly sins; therefore, though well esteemed among men, he was "an abomination in the sight of God." A regular churchgoer, ritual in the extreme, he deemed himself a righteous man, and was considered so by many. But he was a tyrant in the hardest sense of the word,—his tyranny being exercised over those who were too weak and patient to resist the yoke; while his two sons, unable themselves to bear the perpetual bursts of passion and unmerited rebukes, and equally unable to see their mother and sister suffering before their eyes, without power to relieve them, had left their home and country, were prospering in a foreign land, and sending,

through the hands of the worthy rector, occasional remembrances to both of their affection and success. But let us not dwell on so sad, but, it is feared, so true, a picture of one class of men, longer than to show the trial these patient creatures had daily to bear; while we trace the source of their strength up to that grace which was pronounced by Him from whom it flows, and which has ever been found by the Lord's true children, to be indeed "sufficient for them," until we realize the same power sustaining us in cheerful submission under our own appointed trials.

This was the experience of Mrs. Warner and her daughter; they "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Trial without grace elicits the evil of our corrupt hearts; but when grace enters, rebellious feelings are subdued, and those troubles which once seemed unendurable, work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Instead of dwelling on the frailties of others, or judging and condemning them, Ellen kept before her the Scripture view of a child's duties, endeavouring to "adorn the doctrine of God her Saviour by personal conformity to his blessed example; and the peace of mind resulting from such conduct was her abundant reward.

Loving money for its own sake, George Warner was diligent in business, though his money did not add to the comfort of his family, seldom supplying his delicate wife with those things her indifferent health needed; and this furnished Ellen with a

motive for employing every spare hour in needle-work, to obtain the daily glass of wine or animal food, so desirable for preserving the life, and lessening the distressingly weak state of her precious mother. When love is taken out of one right channel, it usually flows deeper in another; as in this instance, that which should have been divided, had now chiefly but one object, and towards that was of the most devoted nature. These opportunities of helping her beloved parent were amongst Ellen's greatest pleasures, and were of no small magnitude when she could go home, her basket laden with the fruits of her own diligence and management.

What an unspeakable comfort they were to each other; how sweetly could they talk of the supporting grace of God, and how brightly anticipate the rest prepared for his people — encouraging each other for the conflict, they unconsciously strengthened their own faith! Then, too, they would calmly speak of the future even on this side the grave; and it was to prepare for this that Ellen, at the age of seventeen, still remained with Miss Banks, from whom she received a small salary, just sufficient to reconcile her father to her being there.

Miss Banks, a person of some learning and deep piety, received pupils more from the good she hoped to do them, than from the absolute need of remuneration. She took girls from twelve years old and upwards, in order to fit them for general usefulness, either as the wives of men with small incomes, nur-

sery governesses, housekeepers, or even respectable service. In the domestic part of the training she could do but little; but in giving them much wise instruction, and the benefit of her own very considerable experience, few could be with her without decided gain.

Miss Banks, Nancy Walton, and the rector's family, were, perhaps, the only people in the village who could well appreciate the trials of the Warners and their exemplary resignation; and the plan kindly suggested by Mr. Herbert was, that at the age of twenty-one Ellen should enter his family as nursery governess, with the charge of the children's wardrobe. Though George Warner would have been willing for his wife and daughter to be supported by private charity, Mr. Herbert knew his caprice too well to think it wise to remove Ellen before she should have a right to decide for herself; and though it would be hard to leave her mother, nothing could have been more in accordance with that mother's wishes, for she knew her daughter had better be safely removed before she was taken from her. And she was right, for George Warner found them too willing and unresisting slaves to wish them gone; miserable men do not like to be alone, and all the victims of temper are miserable.

It was to prepare for this calling that Ellen laboured so diligently to acquire any kind of useful knowledge. Nancy Walton had not been behind with her assistance. She had formed a plan that,

during the holidays, Ellen's days should be spent at Ashton Cottage, whilst Janet, ever ready, should impart to her her newly-acquired knowledge in millinery and dress-making. How quickly those can learn who have an object in view! A few weeks' instruction would be as profitable to Ellen Warner as months might be to many, whilst Janet and Mary were delighted with the plan, looking forward to the coming vacation with impatient pleasure. Thus, though Ellen Warner's path was beset by some great trials, many mercies and consolations were in her lot; mercies which were not suffered to pass unnoticed by her as they do by many, for they that "eye providences shall never want providences to eye." These would light her heart with so much heavenly joy, none need wonder at her appearance of serene happiness.

At times, the thought of her mother's uncertain life, or, rather, certain death, would overwhelm her; but then came the remembrance of what she suffered, which made her almost long for her fetters to be broken: she even thought she could see her fall asleep in Jesus with calm thankfulness. She had learned not to be selfish, and that is a great and hard lesson to learn; whilst all their hours spent together were prized above gold. Often her mother would remind her, that, "though all seemed so nicely arranged, the future was a very uncertain thing as to plans coming true; but the great comfort was to know that the 'steps of a believer are

ordered by the Lord,' and should He see fit to blight this prospect He can as easily prepare another."

The conquest of sin alone is a blessed thing, and though revenge had once such full possession of Ellen's breast, the Holy Spirit had driven it thence; now she loved her father — really and sincerely loved him; she felt how Jesus would have pitied him for his bondage to the worst of masters, and she pitied him too. Theirs was the truest joy, the most genuine thankfulness; for instead of bearing their own troubles they cast them on the God of their salvation, who, as a divine has justly said, "bears the heavy end of our cross." Ellen might have been tempted to wonder why so much evil was permitted, and, doubtless, when faith was low, she did wonder; but she knew the "Lord's throne is in heaven," therefore, all things might turn to her sanctification, so laying her mouth in the dust, she tried not to question his providential dealings.

Wonderful, indeed, is the power of religion, as all who feel it know; and they, in turn, wonder how those who are devoid of such a spring of gladness can support the crosses or enjoy the temporal goods of this life, unmindful of what is so great a mitigator of the former and enhancer of the latter. It were well if all would ask themselves the important question, "Have I found this pearl of greatest value? do I live as happy and useful a life as I might live? or am I one of those, who, led captive by some temper or folly, am constantly hoping for pleasure

and as often disappointed, miserable myself, and adding little to the happiness of those about me?" Seek, then, the grace which alone can conquer those evils which now deprive you of peace; none are sent empty away from the mercy-seat who come with sin and sorrow as their only recommendation to notice. It is to these our gracious Saviour says, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." His gifts are perfect gifts; He is waiting to dispense them, and to those who receive them,—who, finding a Redeemer in this his appointed simple way,—He will be as precious as Ellen Warner had found Him, ever since the day she knew Him as her Redeemer and Deliverer.

Chapter the Third.

BUT what is Janet doing all this time? Is her mind serene and peaceful, like Ellen Warner's? Alas, no! for the Bible says truly, "the way of transgressors is hard." What would she not now have given to turn back and run after Mary? but the die was cast, she had promised to go, and she must carry it out. The remembrance of her father's sorrowful but gentle

reproofs, her grandmother's watchful kindness, the bright picture of the tea-table at Ashton Cottage, so nice and ready for their reception after the long, cold walk from school; all came to her recollection, and, instead of being happy, she was utterly miserable. Then, in the bitterness of her spirit, she turned to Sarah and cried out,—

"Oh, how I wish I had not come; I can never enjoy myself for one minute! What shall I do?"

"Do, you silly child!" returned Sarah; "you should have found that out before: you must go on now. Besides, you will soon be as happy as any of us. Mother will be so glad I have brought you, and then you will see the dress my aunt sent me. You need not buy it, if you don't like it, I'm sure, though you will be a very foolish girl if you lose such a good chance, as your mother would tell you if she were here" (for Sarah was a shrewd girl, and had discovered from Janet's inadvertent remarks the character of both her parents).

"But father would not," thought Janet to herself as Sarah ran on,—

"Very provoking of my aunt to send me a dress not half big enough. I declare if you don't buy it I will sell it to Mrs. Standing's new maid; she is as short and thin as you, Janet, and will be glad enough to get such a bargain, I dare say."

Sarah's foolish tongue ran on in this strain, and Janet did not interrupt her, for she felt glad to be silent: so heavy was the weight on her heart, she

could scarcely breathe, and the tears chased each other down her cheeks as she walked in the dark by the side of her companion. When they arrived Sarah introduced her to her mother, who truly fulfilled her daughter's prophecy, kissed Janet several times, and looked so kindly upon her that her sorrow began to disperse ; and turning to Sarah, she said,—

"Now take your friend up-stairs, and put your frock on her; you can't wear it yourself, you know."

So off the girls went ; and as there is nothing like excitement when we are in trouble, and Sarah's wild spirits were making her very loquacious and droll, Janet began to enter into it all: though she could not so quickly still an upbraiding conscience, she managed to appear pretty cheerful.

Sin is sin in any form ; but the hardest of all to bear, is when we sin against love—when, trampling upon it, we bring grief to those who have so often proved the depth and sincerity of their love. But in spite of all, when the blue balzarine dress came out, and Janet found it fitted her exactly, looked at herself in the glass, and thought how cheap she should get it—it was too much for her weak mind, and completely overcame her. Perhaps it was the first time she had ever known how really beautiful she was ; now it was settled beyond a doubt, and multitudes of intoxicating thoughts rushed into her head at this exquisite realisation.

Soon, however, the charm was over; she sat down, and leaning her head on her hand, the deep sigh

showed how dear it cost her to exchange a merry heart for a gay dress; for neither dress nor beauty can cure the heart-ache, and this she felt was bad enough to bear. They were just ready to go into the little parlour, where a party, such as the Joneses could give, was to celebrate Sarah's fifteenth birthday; when her mother came into the room in a great flurry, saying,—

"Well, Janet, actually here is Michael James sent to look after you! What nonsense, to be sure! just as if I could not take proper care of you when you are come to see my girl!"

Poor Janet, how her heart beat at this intelligence! It seemed like an escape from the fowler to get away; and yet how should she meet her grandmother? The blue dress was soon off, however, and the stuff one on again, for she could not help the stronger feeling being that of joy to go home.

"Surely you are not going now?" said Sarah, almost bewildered. "We will send word that you shall come with me to school in the morning."

"Oh, no!" Janet replied, "I will go back directly. It was very wicked in me to come at all; and I am very sorry I have given you so much trouble. I am indeed obliged for all your kindness, but I find I can't be happy to disobey grandmother. Cousin Mary once said she could not; I wondered at her then, but now I know how she felt, though I don't know *what* she will say to me! I hope she won't

send me home just yet." And then she burst into a flood of tears.

But now Sarah was in her heart as glad to get Janet away as she had been to bring her; when she saw how lovely she looked in the dress, her jealousy was roused, and she feared her friend would make more impression on the visitors than she had intended: but she was disappointed, inasmuch as she had failed in her plan of disposing of her unfortunate garment, and now she felt the opportunity was lost.

Janet asked Michael many questions on their way home. At first she almost ran, but when she came nearer (and it was a long walk), she felt what all do feel by nature,—afraid to see the person against whom they have sinned. If she could but have seen Mary and got her to plead for her, she thought —— but no, that was impossible, she must endure it: so on they went. They had scarcely reached the cottage-door, Janet trembling all over her, when Mrs. Walton, hearing their approach, threw it open as wide and willingly as the night on which she was first welcomed there; and before another thought could follow, the poor wanderer was folded to her grandmother's kind breast; and though tears almost choked her utterance, she muttered,—

"Oh, my own dear child, how thankful I am to get you back!"

Surely such a greeting would have melted a heart of steel. Janet thought she had felt the sinfulness

and painfulness of disobedience before, but now it came upon her tenfold, and she "abhorred herself in dust and ashes."

"You are tired, I'm sure, poor girl!" said Nancy. "Had you finished tea when Michael came?"

But Janet could think of nothing but her own guilt; whilst making no excuses, she wept bitter tears, as she leaned her head on her grandmother's shoulder, imploring her forgiveness.

"You have hurt yourself more than me, dear child," said Nancy; "and you have sinned against the Lord more than me: but He is as willing to pardon as I am,—ay, and infinitely more; besides He can heal the broken heart better than I can. It has been a sad day for you, darling; the further we go from God, the more our trouble: but He is waiting to forgive, so let us kneel down before we have tea together again."

Here was another painful awakening to Janet; the meal of which they always thought so much was still ready and untouched by her grandmother and cousin; and the thought came over her, O how Mary must wish I had never come to make them miserable! But Mary's heart smote her that night, almost as much as Janet's: conscious of a multitude of evil temptations half encouraged, she felt she had not acted kindly towards her; she might at least have tried to bring Janet home, whereas she had not made the slightest effort, but stood indifferently by, full of hardness, and coldness, and jealousy. Sarah

Jones was, in point of station, perhaps the first girl in the school, and Mary was not pleased with her decided preference for Janet; though, before she came, she would not have prized her patronage or good opinion in the least. She was, moreover, afraid Janet was taking more of her grandmother's love than she could spare, ignorant that in reality none went from her to Janet, and Nancy's liberal soul had room for two as well as one. But seeing her cousin humbled and heart-broken, humbled Mary, too, and melted her heart; and if we could have read it, we should have seen more true love and real interest in her cousin's welfare, than had existed since her arrival. The dark cloud of jealousy had now passed by, giving way to love so strong as enabled her to enter heart and soul into all that concerned her, feeling herself also as much a sinner as poor Janet.

When the prayer was over they had tea, and then sitting round the fire, the evening passed away. Nancy did not wish the impressions which she trusted that night would make to be effaced; she, therefore, sent the girls to bed earlier than usual, while she remained up alone to hold communion with God.

"Oh, Mary," Janet exclaimed, the first thing on getting up-stairs, "how you must wish me gone for turning this happy cottage upside down!"

"Janet," Mary quickly replied, "don't say so; if I had loved you more, you would not have been in this misery. I ought not to have let you go. I am just

as guilty in God's sight as you are; but I never felt as I did when grandmother was praying. How very precious the blood of Christ is to poor sinners! I used to think I loved Him, but it was not as I love Him now, I know—He is so exactly what I want. No one has any idea what a deceitful heart I have, but I feel as though a great load were taken from it; but it is you have to forgive me, not me you."

Janet felt she did not quite understand Mary; but thanking her over and over again, both became calm and composed and soon fell asleep.

How far more blessed was the influence of Nancy Walton's kind welcome to the returning prodigal, than harsh words and stern looks would have been; they will never melt a heart, nor bind one up already broken. Perhaps some may think her too lenient; but she thought how Christ would have acted, and He was her example; how He had dealt towards her backslidings and wanderings; how His ever open arms had again and again received her only to pardon and to love, and He was her Master! No wonder, then, she was so lovely, for she trod in His footsteps from whom all loveliness flows.

From that day the greatest of all changes was going on with Janet, while Mary entirely lost the sullenness she had of late assumed, now taking the place of the cheerful one. As for Sarah Jones, she had taken little further notice of her friend since her taste for nonsense and gossip had lessened, until the last day of the half year; when, just as they were

settling down for their accustomed address at parting, Sarah whispered in her ear.—

"Then you are determined you won't accept a good offer?"

"What do you mean, Sarah?" said Janet.

"You won't have my dress, though you can have it so cheap and look so nice in it," Sarah replied.

She had touched the right string, and Janet's foolish heart reminded her how very nice she had looked in the dress. She was beginning to feel the power of temptation and her own weakness, when Mary, now thoughtful for her cousin's welfare, suspecting the subject of conversation (for, of course, she knew the whole history), came up and whispered in the other ear,—

"Think of grandmother's prayer, Janet, and of the text we read this morning,—'If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.'"

This was sufficient.

"No," Janet said, resolutely, "I don't want — at least, I won't — have your dress, Sarah."

"Ah, you do want it, that is plain enough; you dare not have it, is the truth," Sarah retorted, bitterly.

"You are right, Sarah," Janet quietly answered, "I dare not have it: I have a very vain heart, so I am better without anything which can add to my vanity."

The address just then commenced, and was a very solemn one. Three girls out of the eight were leaving;

two of the three were sisters, children of the village school-master; their diligence and attainments had been most gratifying to their kind teacher, who entertained a well-grounded hope of their settling down useful members of society. Not so the third; for Sarah Jones had been an unceasing source of anxiety to Miss Banks during the three years she had been with her; she therefore availed herself of this last opportunity for faithful dealing, thus delivering her own conscience regarding her:—

"Sarah," she said, "you are now leaving us, as I fear, fully resolved on trying the world's service: should you live, you will find it a galling bondage; and should you die, you will pay for it in an eternity of woe. Think solemnly, therefore, and choose this day whom you will serve; but in choosing, don't forget to count the cost. You know those who love the Lord find His yoke easy and His burden light; for 'godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.' Many have been your privileges here, and many more in the faithful ministry of our rector; you are, therefore, without excuse, and can never reply to the condemning sentence one word of justification: for many have cared for your soul, many voices have sounded in your ears the alarming warning, 'Flee from the wrath to come;' 'Flee to the city of refuge;' to Mount Calvary, where Jesus died that you might live."

Janet had now little more than a month to stay at Ashton Cottage, and the days seemed to pass almost with the speed of lightning. The holidays, so long anticipated with pleasure, had arrived; and if it is not often in this life that our hopes have a full fruition, in this instance they approached very near it. Ellen Warner came daily according to the proposed plan, and needles and tongues alike were going with considerable diligence; for girls may be happy in such circumstances if they are not harbouring unkind thoughts of their fellow-creatures. Now all were bent on obliging Ellen; and being the recipient of so much kindness made that grateful girl often the merriest of the company; though as evening came on, the remembrance of the cloud which hung over their dwelling would dim her vision, making her more grave and serious. Many a time as Nancy closed the door after Ellen the girls would notice the tears in their grandmother's eyes; but the darkness was made light before her, and the crooked places plain. Mrs. Walton felt really thankful to have her at the cottage, so great was the advantage to the girls in having a companion deeply taught in the school of grace. Janet was full of pleasure and zeal in the object, so that she, once the giddiest among them, would willingly have curtailed their hours of recreation or their walks, to give Ellen every chance of getting on with her work. This plan was continued after the school recommenced its duties; much useful reading being mixed with

some of a lighter character, and Nancy thought they would gain in one way what they might lose in another.

But February was marching on rapidly, and at last overtook them; and Mrs. Walton had the delight of returning this sweet girl to her father's house, as she firmly hoped and trusted, with her heart completely changed. This she had, from time to time, hinted in letters to her son; but in the last she had ventured to speak very decidedly about Janet, whose grief at leaving that lovely peaceful dwelling was not small; for though she loved her parents most fondly, and now knew what a treasure she possessed in her father; she knew also how many temptations would assail her, and how weak and foolish a thing human nature is. When the dark day arrived, a place was taken in the coach to convey Janet away from the village of H——, where she had learned so much; and that morning her father received a letter from his mother, containing the pleasing confirmation of all their hopes; immediately after reading which he had answered in the following lines:—

"Your letter, my dearest mother, has just come safe to hand, and I hasten to tell you how overwhelmed I feel by the blessings the Lord has showered down upon me, more especially when I remember my own inconsistencies and wanderings; but truly none can say they are dealt with according to their deserts. No words can ever express my gratitude

to you, but I know you are rewarded in the satisfaction of seeing dear Janet brought into the fold of Christ. We are very busy, and I must be off in time to meet my precious daughter. Dear girl, her conversion will be good for us all. To little Fanny she may be an especial comfort, for she becomes more and more of an invalid.

"For myself, in spite of 'the weights which so easily beset me,' one word is my stay, 'I am thy salvation;' while my faith that those so near to me will some day know the same firm foundation, seldom of late has wavered.

"My dearest wife joins me in much love to you and Mary. May God's grace attend and ever keep you, is the prayer of your grateful and affectionate son,

"JAMES WALTON."

This letter, with many others, had been despatched from Mr. Manor's office, and James Walton had gone out on some business, when, returning suddenly, he told a brother clerk that he was ill and would like to be taken home. But before he could be removed, or a doctor reach him, all was over as to this life; the same complaint of the heart which had carried off his father with almost less notice, having likewise taken him from the joys and sorrows of this mortal scene.

He was soon removed—laid on his own bed—his poor wife and sons were giving themselves up to unrestrained weeping, when Janet entered her now

sad home. The withering feeling of bereavement which took possession of her breast, none can tell but those who have felt the same. Her mother could scarcely notice her, but Mrs. Bradley, a Christian friend and neighbour, did what she could to comfort all. Her kind husband, too, went directly for Mrs. James Walton's sister, to bring her back that night, and forwarded the mournful tidings to one and another.

What worlds, if they were hers to dispose of, would Janet have given for one hour — one short hour — to assure her father that his prayers were answered; that his painful anxiety on her account, his kind yet sorrowful looks, were now no longer needed; but that his hopes and looks might brighten, for she had become "a follower of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." But his dreams were too glorious to need any addition, his sleep too deep and serene for even such good news as that to awaken; and Janet will have the comfort some time of knowing he died in the happy assurance of it.

What a dull, cheerless blank, life seemed without him! It was a trial to leave Ashton Cottage, but the great reconciliation was the thought of her father—and now he was gone! Then came some of the good instruction she had received to her mind, and resolving to drown her own bitter grief in endeavours to console her mother, whose loss was far greater than her own, she rose from her knees

and prepared to go in search of her, but first indulged one long, earnest gaze, on those placid features, and, throwing herself upon the bed, cold as they were, she kissed them over and over again, and could scarcely make up her mind to leave them ; then wiping the smooth skin which she had moistened with her tears, she gently replaced the cover and rushed out of the room.

Chapter the Fourth.

THERE are often in February days when the air is more sweet and soft than any other month in the year can boast of; they seem to come with healing on their wings, the first tidings of the return of spring after the chilling severity of winter.

It was just one of those days, when all that was mortal of James Walton was carried to its last earthly resting-place, there to wait the glad summons to arise and meet the Lord in the air. He was followed by many mourners, for great was his loss. Amongst the number was Nancy Walton, almost supporting her daughter-in-law; she sorrowed not as one without hope, nor indeed did any: but all could not so fully realize the great gain of the departed; neither could all look forward to joining his spirit so soon in the courts above. But while she meekly bowed her head to the bereaving angel, her tears flowed fast for the living, for well she knew the extent of their loss; and though in her experience the kind injunction, "Let thy widows trust in me," had been sufficient for every difficulty, her poor daughter had not the same refuge. She ventured to hope, however, that her present lonely condition might lead her to accept the full cup of consolation offered to the weary and heavy laden. Although Janet was a believer, she was still so young and inexperienced, that her grandmother could not repress the deep anxiety her untried condition awakened; until her spiritually-furnished memory supplied her with the promise, "I will be a father to the fatherless," which composed her to something like quiet trust. Ellen Warner, sent with Nancy, by the kind suggestion of Mr. Herbert, was by the side of her friend Janet, who was so early called to taste the disappointment of blighted hopes. It was indeed a bitter grief; but

her clear faith astonished many, who in their unbelief were surprised to see the word fulfilled, "As thy day so shall thy strength be;" for no one was more calm than Janet, excepting for short seasons now and then, when life looked uninviting, and the uncertain future would rise up before her: but activity is the great safeguard against sinking under trials, and there was need for this. During the long, long week, when death was in the house, no plans had been proposed, save when Janet and her village friends were alone, and then they would quietly speak of and prepare for the change. The morning after the funeral, however, Mrs. James Walton's sister, a clever, active, and benevolent woman of the world, was quite ready with a well-digested plan for the future disposing of the family.

To leave the city they were in was impossible, on account of the boys; she therefore generously offered to remove her own long-established business, and enter into partnership with her sister: whilst Janet would be of the greatest service in the undertaking. Nancy's heart withered at this proposal; she saw at once the temptations to which Janet would be subjected; while to induce her to leave her mother and sister, would be cruel and undutiful: but the great comfort was, that in any difficulty she had a home at Ashton Cottage, where she would always find a welcome; and as no other plan seemed ready, this was finally adopted. Thus the small property left by

James Walton could remain untouched, until, health and strength failing, they might need it more.

Again the dreaded day of parting came; and, after committing this precious child to God with many prayers, Nancy Walton took her place with her companion in the coach to return to her native village: but the Holy Ghost, who had so lately taken possession of Janet's heart, remained with her, revealing himself in his gracious character of Comforter; and she was well supported.

On arriving at home, Nancy wondered much that Mary should seem scarcely able to smile on meeting her; although she was come from a house of mourning, she had anticipated a more cheerful greeting. But Mary soon explained herself, and when they sat down to tea began her sad story.

"We have had such an awful death in the village to-day, grandmother. You know we heard, just as you were setting off, that Sarah Jones was ill; now she is dead: but how different it will be with her from what it is with dear uncle!"

Just as she said these words, Miss Banks walked in, both to welcome Nancy home, and to disburden her mind by speaking of the late event; and, after the usual inquiries, she related the whole history.

Sarah Jones had gone out with her friend, Mrs. Standing's maid, and had taken cold. The next morning, being far from well, she was sitting in their little parlour, when Mr. Herbert called, and, seeing

her state, thought it a suitable opportunity for speaking very seriously to her on her life and habits.

Sarah remained silent some time, for no one could have been offended by that affectionate warning; but the welcome remembrance of being young suggested itself to her mind, and for a moment stilled the rising fears. She was naturally strong and healthy, too: it seemed most unlikely she should die just then.

Her thoughts that faithful minister read pretty well, and reminded her of the proofs that her hopes on that ground were without foundation.

"For, Sarah," said he, "you may notice the graves in the churchyard; many younger and many your age lie there, and we know not but the next may be opened for you."

Unable, however, to reach her conscience by conversation, he hoped to do so in prayer, and offered his petitions with all the fervency and unction the case inspired; and then left her, apparently melted into something like reflection.

In this hopeful state she remained some time; until her mother, thinking no one ought to disturb her daughter, succeeded in drying the tears none need have regretted her shedding. The next day Sarah was much worse, and the day after that delirium had come on; and in the intervals of reason she entreated to have Mr. Herbert sent for.

He was soon by her bed-side, waiting in patience for the lucid moments, when he might proclaim a finished and complete salvation to that poor girl.

"One look from dying eyes fixed upon the brazen serpent saved the bitten Israelites; and one look of faith on the Cross will save you, my poor Sarah. See the Lamb of God bearing away the sins of the world! The thief on the cross had reviled the Saviour; but, discovering his own danger, and the all-sufficiency of Jesus, was saved, and is now in Paradise! All, you see, that is needful can be done in a moment; rest on this finished work and you are safe."

With such short but powerful instances did that spiritual shepherd endeavour to arrest the attention of the dying girl before him; but it was too late. Many had been her privileges; she had rejected warning after warning; now she had to tread the dark valley alone; and, one moment shrieking with horror, and the next groaning with despair, her head sank among the billows to rise no more!

Here Miss Banks ceased; and others, too, may pause, thinking the case too bad to be true. Would that it were so. Such cases, alas! are perpetually occurring, yet the chief concern still is, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek."

No word of consolation remained for the mourners; but, having other children, Mr. Herbert took the opportunity of dealing plainly with those parents, who, anxious for every worldly gain, had totally neglected "the only one thing needful." It is true, they would

not have opposed religion in their child, if it had seemed to make her happier; and they had, from circumstances, allowed her every advantage out of the house; but their own conduct and conversation at home were a practical contradiction of all she heard elsewhere.

This would prove no excuse for Sarah at the bar of the Most High. In her understanding she knew that "her sins had separated between her and God;" that Christ had come "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" and yet, though besought over and over again, she had refused to be "reconciled."

Inestimable is the worth of a faithful and enlightened pastor: with truth it might be said of Mr. Herbert, that he fulfilled the Apostle's injunction, "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine;" "comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak." In the joys and sorrows of his flock he was always ready to sympathise. Like a father amongst his people, even the worst held him in reverence, though they slighted his warnings; while to those who could appreciate them, his frequent visits and truthful sermons were reckoned as their best blessings.

Sadly and slowly the bell was tolling in the village of H——, when Janet Walton received the intelligence of her schoolfellow's sudden death; and, going to her own room, she remained lost in wonder at the grace of God, which "had plucked her a brand from

the burning." Poor, poor Sarah! her case was beyond all remedy now. Neither prayers, nor sighs, nor tears, could be of any avail; for "no man can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." Then, thinking how suitable an opportunity it gave for speaking to her aunt and mother, she rejoined them at their work; and, after reading the letter, spoke in a manner which astonished them both: for, be it remembered, only four months ago Janet was likewise a giddy, foolish girl. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Though her appeal was short, it was urgent; her sense of the importance of the subject deprived her of fear, while her short experience of the "grace which bringeth salvation" had not only filled her with "joy and peace in believing;" but had so deeply interested her in the spiritual welfare of others, as made her hail every opportunity for the introduction of what she knew to be the sweetest of all themes. Nothing could more powerfully prove to Mrs. James Walton the great advantage of religion, than the change it had effected in her daughter; for although she did not like what she termed her "excessive seriousness;" she was herself in no humour to take pleasure in worldly folly just now; and noticing the universal improvement, rejoiced to think how great a help she might be.

The business in which they had embarked was the sale of small wares, and millinery; for the carrying on of which, a neat shop was taken on the outskirts

of the city. Janet petitioned that to her might be left the household work, with the care of her sister, while her mother and aunt would be nice companions in the shop. To this plan her mother would have yielded; but "Aunt Sarah" knew well that a girl of Janet's appearance and pleasant manners would be no small addition behind the counter. It was, therefore, finally arranged that the day should be divided; and as Janet was by no means clever in domestic concerns, her mornings were to be spent in the shop, and her afternoons in needle-work by Fanny's couch. This was a judicious plan, and well, indeed, all was carried on under the superintendence of clever, energetic "Aunt Sarah;" even the bereaved widow seemed in a measure to regain her spirits; and Janet was always cheerful, for she did whatever came before her, "looking to the end."

Trying as her situation at first appeared, it had many advantages; for neither she nor her mother were qualified to rule or form plans, though they could easily adopt them when formed; so that in all points, religion excepted, Miss Ashworth was invaluable to them. But remembering the promise, "In due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not," Janet's prayers for the conversion of those so kind and dear to her, ascended with increasing frequency; never relaxing her diligence because at present no fruit was granted. In Fanny, young as she was, she had a friend as well as an affectionate sister; for Janet had already acquired sufficient influence over her to

draw her out of herself so completely; that her face, once pensive in its expression, by degrees became happy and bright, as though her sister's peaceful soul were reflected in it.

Thus the days which in anticipation Janet had dreaded, chased each other with speed: for with the exception of poor Mrs. James Walton, whose spirits were still subject to seasons of great depression, all entered with the fullest energy into their occupations. As for Miss Ashworth, she was too busy fulfilling her worldly calling, too ready to forget herself and enter into the concerns of others, not to have her mind so fully occupied with the cares of this life, as to preclude the entrance of more important thoughts.

The first year, therefore, glided swiftly by, and the dreaded anniversary came; long and heavy as it seemed, like all other days, it too passed away. March soon followed, when an examination was made as to the result of a business which had been well directed and attended to; and great was their mutual joy on finding their hopes fully realised. Being now, as they trusted, established, they had only to continue their economical, well-managed, and diligent style of living, and the future presented a fair prospect. This was an encouragement to go on patiently, reaping the pleasure which is inseparable from a cheerful performance of duty.

Chapter the Fifth.

IT was Miss Ashworth's custom to have on the counter a little vase of such flowers as they could obtain, and the arrangement of them was generally allotted to Janet. One fine spring morning, she was, as usual, making the best of her limited resources, when the postman, walking in, handed a letter to her, fragrant with sweet violets.

She was not long in breaking the seal, for pleasant, indeed, was every remembrance of Ashton Cottage, and tidings from there were ever welcome. The letter was from Mary, as usual, with one enclosed from Mrs. Walton to her daughter-in-law; containing a request that she would bring Fanny, and come to visit them directly; leaving Janet at home with her aunt, to carry on the business until her mother's return, when she should revisit Ashton Cottage; Fanny remaining the whole time.

This was a joyful proposition; Janet's ready help cleared all difficulties, so that on the first of May her mother and sister left the city, and were warmly welcomed at their journey's end. Janet's heart followed them faithfully, picturing their arrival at that much-loved spot, as she worked with redoubled diligence, resolved "Aunt Sarah" should not be overburdened; nevertheless, that kind relative, seeing her gaze intently into the street, playfully startled her, saying,—

"Well, Janet, tea will be very acceptable when you have time to get it ready;" adding, "What is it you see out-of-doors so very attractive, child? Something is upon your mind; suppose you tell me what it is you are planning about."

The colour came into Janet's face at this gentle rebuke, and after bemoaning her idleness, she replied,—

"Well, aunt, you shall know. I was wondering why grandmother had not fixed a time for our going

to Ashton Cottage before, for it is such a sweet place. I should like you to see what a lovely, happy place it is. But I ought not to wonder, for I know it must be for some good reason."

"I think I can guess what," Miss Ashworth quickly replied. "Mrs. Walton is a wise woman, and although your dear father did leave a little money behind him, it is not enough to put the boys into the business he meant them for, and to keep you all in idleness. Your grandmother knew that you must all set to and work; and a very good thing it has been for you, for you were not very fond of it once, Janet. So I guess she waited until she heard how the shop had answered after the first year, and now she knows we have paid our way, she has sent for you."

This answer was most satisfactory, and Janet could not help adding,—

"Yes, dear aunt; but we should not have got on so well if God had not put it into Mrs. Manor's heart to speak so kindly for us to all her friends. I often wish you loved Him, aunt Sarah!"

"Well, girl," Miss Ashworth replied, while the tears stood in her eyes, "I don't know but I do love Him; I often wish I did. It is enough to make any one think well of religion to see what it has done for you. I wondered, when I heard the sad news of your father's death, what on earth would be done with such a vain piece of goods as you were. When I taught you dress-making, I used to think if you were my girl, I would soon alter you; but such a man as

your father was, if he could not do it without God's help, I need not have thought I could do much. Your poor mother never had such advantages as yours when she was young; then her life in service was a sad thing for her. If she had not happened to get such a good husband, I don't know what might have become of her: but I begin to see religion is a very different thing from what I once thought it; and that I am no better than her, though I may not have been so inclined to gaiety. You must pray for us both, Janet."

Just then a customer came in, and then another and Janet was disappointed that their conversation was so quickly closed; but she had heard enough to make her almost happy, and felt a token for good had been granted. She did not introduce the subject again, thinking it might be better left; but longed for night and the quiet of her own room, where she might pour out her heart in thanksgiving to "the Author of every good gift," and "seek the wisdom which cometh from above;" for prayer had become her unfailing refuge in joy or sorrow since she had really learned to walk with God. When there, Janet missed her little companion, but rejoiced to think of her enjoying the pure country air. Her brothers missed Fanny, too; for they were kind boys; and felt a pleasure in carrying her from the little parlour behind the shop, into her bedroom at night, and down again in the morning. All that could be done to alleviate her sufferings was consi-

derately attended to; and although little hope was entertained of restoration, from the slow progress of spinal complaints, they trusted she would prolong her welcome stay among them, perhaps, for years.

How different, thought Janet, as she sat down alone, are God's ways from man's! Her chief concern and care had been for her mother; she had seldom ventured to hope "Aunt Sarah" could be so softened, for she had been accustomed to regard her with almost reverence; and now she had heard from her own lips that even she had recommended the religion of Christ to her.

She earnestly wished her aunt could have been at Ashton Cottage, to be guided in her search after truth by Mr. Herbert; for although their own minister was a kind and benevolent man, he was not so father-like and diligent in visitation as Mr. Herbert, which was, as it ever is, a great loss. It was only natural she should wish her kind relative could share the privileges she had once enjoyed, and profited by them; but Janet had to learn this lesson,—that though the Lord uses means, He is not dependent on them; His word and His Spirit being sufficient for everything.

She had been indulging her thoughts for some time, when hearing a noise in the next room, and knowing it was late, she involuntarily went and gently opened the door, fearing something might be wrong. But what was her joy at seeing her aunt on her knees, with the Bible open before her, while the

tears were falling from her closed eyelids. Janet was not heard, and returned as quietly as she came, determined that in the morning, when they were preparing the shop, she would again introduce the subject nearest her heart.

The morning came; the boys left the breakfast-table, and Miss Ashworth and her niece repaired to their daily labours. Janet was looking upward for wisdom to say what was right, when her aunt broke the short silence herself, saying,—

"You read your Bible a good deal, don't you, Janet? I have not been in the habit of reading mine, and I am not young now; so somehow I can't take it in. I wish we could read it together, and then you could explain it."

Janet trembled all over to think of "Aunt Sarah" referring to her; but trying to forget herself, she modestly answered,—

"Grandmother used to say, we must just let the Bible mean what it says; but that very few people will do so, and that is why they don't enjoy it."

"Well," Miss Ashworth replied, "that is just what I was wondering. You remember telling us of the poor girl that died so miserably; and Mr. Herbert had told her that Christ was the same to us that the brazen serpent was to the bitten people; but I don't think salvation can be such a simple thing."

"No; so the Jews thought," Janet said quickly, remembering a sermon of Mr. Herbert's on that very subject; "therefore they died in their sins. That

is just Satan's way; he knows he can't alter the truth that Christ died for us, and is quite ready to receive us; so he tries to keep us from believing it."

"But then," returned Miss Ashworth, "one must be holy if one is a believer."

"Yes," Janet replied; "but we can never have any holiness of our own. Christ saves *sinners*, not those who are righteous; He is the door, and the way, and the life. Until you know Him you can know nothing of holiness; but when you do know Him, he will supply you with everything."

"If that is true," returned Miss Ashworth, "it is welcome news. For the first time in my life I feel I am a fearful sinner."

"God says it is so, aunt dear," replied Janet; and then she related the history of her own disobedience at H——, and her grandmother's kind reception of her; adding, "That is just Christ's way of receiving us; and if we won't accept pardon and eternal life as a free gift, if we won't be met by kindness in this way, we shall never have it at all: then Satan will have gained his end, and we shall be lost! Yes, dear aunt, you may safely believe it, for I can show you the texts."

"Ay, do show them to me, Janet," returned Miss Ashworth. "But I found some myself last night, for I could not sleep, and I wished for morning, that we might read and talk together."

Janet quickly turned to several: John, iii. 14 to 18;

John, vi. 28, 29, and 32 to 35; John, x. 27, 28, 29; John, iv. 10 to 14; Luke, xii. 4 to 9; Luke, xv. And just as she had completed the history of the returning prodigal, coming empty-handed to receive whatever a kind father would give him—the shop not quite ready—their first morning customer entered, for the forenoon was generally pretty far advanced before their business began. Janet attended well to her duties, and none, perhaps, would have suspected how near the throne of the King of kings that lonely girl's heart was dwelling; but near, indeed, it was; for her short Christian experience had taught her not only her own weakness, but also the means and store of strength, ready to be called down when needed.

The evening drew nigh, and with it the return of the boys; then came bed-time, and Janet wished she dare have gone to her aunt's room; but Miss Ashworth was not a common person, and though her niece truly loved her, there were some particles of fear combined with her love; while, on the other hand, her aunt was too considerate to curtail the hours of rest so desirable for Janet. Both therefore retired as usual to their rooms; but with morning came the season for some uninterrupted conversation, and the subject was quickly resumed.

"Janet," Miss Ashworth began, "I have been thinking much of that word, 'whosoever;' it must mean any body."

"Yes, aunt, indeed it does; as grandmother used

to say, 'If any one wants a Saviour, Jesus is waiting to be gracious to that very person.' The only thing, after our wishing to know Jesus, which keeps us apart, is our trying to bring something with us beside sins and sorrows."

"Ah, Janet," returned Miss Ashworth, "just to think of having lived to my age as dark as a child about all this, while my chief concern has been to provide decently for this short life! So long as I gave away all I could spare to the poor, and was in regular good habits, I thought I should do well enough; going to church and almsgiving, and paying my way, were the holiness in which I hoped to appear before the Lord: now I see they are but filthy rags, and the righteousness of Christ is the only robe that can cover a naked soul when bereft of all in which it once trusted. I have gone to church partly from custom, and partly as a kind of propitiation, thinking I should gain some favour, or title to favour, by doing so; but now I see my mistake; scales have fallen from my eyes, and everything appears in a different light. The Bible says, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,' and has sent us a message of reconciliation. He does not even meet us half way, for He knows we can't get so far as that; He comes to our very hearts and says, 'Be ye reconciled to God, He is reconciled to you.' His blood washes away all our sin, and His fulfilling the law for us provides us with a 'wedding garment.' Why was not I taken off when poor Sarah Jones was called? It

would have gone as hard with me as with her, for I think I'm something like the Pharisees, and they were but little better than the Sadducees; and even now, in spite of all these texts, I feel to want to be doing something: I wish I felt myself holy, Janet; only think how wrong it is to be so careful for the things of this life: how I have wasted mine!"

"Yes, dear aunt," Janet replied, "I dare say you do; but believe me, you had better feel yourself a sinner; you must not expect to feel holy: 'our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,' so how can you feel holy after knowing this truth? But when your faith is fixed on the Lamb of God, His Spirit will fill your soul with a great desire to walk in His footsteps; for He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. When I was in such deep trouble at Ashton Cottage, Mr. Herbert called one morning, and after reading the 10th of Hebrews he spoke so nicely about Christ having opened a way by which guilty sinners could be saved; for I felt then as though I was drowning in a sea of guilt, and was struggling dreadfully for life. He said that while I made one effort to save myself, I was only in greater danger of the sea engulfing me; but so soon as I ceased making any effort, but trusted to the strong arm of Jesus, the Saviour and Deliverer, I should feel his firm grasp, and know that I was safe for eternity. This seemed to take all my fears away. My heart flowed with love and gratitude; then I felt I could present my body 'a living sacrifice, well pleas-

ing to God.' Until by the Holy Ghost we can call God our Father, it is impossible for us to please Him; for all the service He can accept is as from children. Shall I read you the chapter?"

"Yes, dear niece, do read it," her aunt replied; "we are ready for our customers now, I think."

The chapter was concluded; but any further remarks were prevented by the usual interruption. As day after day came, however, the conversation and searching of the Bible were renewed; meeting every night in Miss Ashworth's room for the purpose of studying that blessed volume, "which shineth as a light in a dark place." And well it was for these seekers, its pages needed no interpreter but the "Holy Spirit, which took of the things of Christ and showed them unto them." Well it was that Janet had heard and received that free and glorious Gospel, and now could watch her aunt's doubts give way one after another under its power; learning the wisdom of abiding by the kind injunction, "Be not fearful but believing:" so that in a short time she became a firm and humble believer, "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

That her correct, but worldly-minded, relative should be the subject of so great a change, was to Janet a mystery, indeed; knowing the work was not her own, she never attempted to retain the glory, but received it as an answer to prayer: an answer far beyond all she had ventured to expect, and which greatly increased her trust and thankfulness, bringing forcibly

to her mind that encouraging text, "With God all things are possible."

When Mrs. Walton's letter was read, although Janet heartily rejoiced in her mother and sister being the first to enjoy the recreation of the country, she had patiently resigned herself to feel the hours pass slowly until the arrival of the longed-for day of departure. But far different her experience had proved; August seemed at hand, almost before May was gone; her mother's return, and consequently her going, were fast approaching.

It is astonishing how quickly and abidingly lessons are learned when the want of them has caused us suffering! This principle accounted for the improvement Janet had made of the advantages which, during her stay at Ashton Cottage, had been of no common order. Not only did Mr. Herbert's ministry commend itself to the conscience from its scriptural character, but that teaching was daily carried out by her pious grandmother, whose unceasing care Janet had been during her twelve weeks' residence with her. "Kept on the pure milk of the word, she had grown thereby;" her steps, so far as she had advanced, were planted on a rock, and she held securely the truths she had been taught. So prepared, therefore, the heavy trial which would have overthrown the faith of many, was overruled for her good, meeting in a singular degree Janet's peculiar weaknesses: for nothing could have been more revolting to her now than the once fascinating vanities,

while the simple sable garments were most congenial to her chastened feelings.

She was "a babe in Christ;" and having simple, scriptural views of the plan of salvation, she could on that important foundation enlighten many who, harassed as were the poor Jews of old by the traditions and interpretations of men, are kept far off from peace. The only service acceptable to the Lord springs from love and a "willing mind." So teaches the Bible, and so taught Mr. Herbert, instead of "binding burdens on the people grievous to be borne." Would that all preaching were as strictly "ordered by the word of God;" that all as clearly saw the dispensation of works past; and one of grace having taken its place, according to the declaration, "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second;" that sinners are now left under the closing permission, "Whosoever will may come, and take of the water of life freely."

Chapter the Sixth.

UT the tenth of August came ; Janet's birthday, which she was to commemorate by a journey to Ashton Cottage. Her mother had returned, renovated in health and spirits by the delightful country air ; but for the change Janet most desired she has yet some years to wait. It seemed wonderful to her inexperienced mind, that any one could be so long

with her grandmother and not become like her; but she was thus reminded, that the changing of a heart is beyond the power of any human being to effect; that though "Paul may plant and Apollos water, God only can give the increase." The parting with "Aunt Sarah," now become so dear a friend, was a sorrowful one; but Janet had no doubt of her conversion, and rejoiced to leave her mother under such good care. She had been, in the Lord's hand, the means of recommending religion to one, her superior in almost every natural gift; for God had confounded the wise with what man would esteem foolishness; and won by the conversation and life of her niece, Janet and her aunt were bound together by the closest of all ties. Subjects of the same fall, they were also subjects of the same redemption; and regarded one another as fellow travellers and helpers of each other's joy: no wonder, then, that when the parting came Janet drove from C—— with more sorrow than joy depicted on her countenance. The bright prospect, however, soon dispersed the clouds; and when the journey ended she recognised the faithful Michael, sent to convey her box as before, she yielded herself to feelings of unmixed delight.

But while we have been watching Janet and her friends, how has it fared with the quiet villagers in their peaceful dwelling?—what are Mary Walton's thoughts, as she gazes with unmixed admiration on her cousin's beauty?

Remembering the lessons learnt in seasons of temptation, and being exercised thereby; she had been pursuing the even tenor of her way—useful, dutiful, and diligent. Finding that to think little of herself and much of the comfort of others is a happy thing, bringing its own reward; the jealousy which had once embittered her cousin's friendship was drowned in her sympathy and interest for her fairer but more tried friend. They were indeed a joyful group round that tea-table; Janet ever and anon closed her eyes that she might realise the soothing influence of the soft summer air; and then re-opened them to make quite sure that it was more than a dream. Amidst all this gladness, however, one cloud came over her vision, caused by the change in her grandmother's appearance; whose health, though still moderately good considering her years, had received a severe shock at the death of her worthy son. Neither could she conceal it from Mary, who, living with her, had scarcely noticed the advance of age, excepting in some slight alterations in her grandmother's habits.

When night came, therefore, they saw that dear parent repose her weary limbs in bed: then coming down again, warm as the weather was, they drew closely over the little fire, and talking to each other without reserve, they sat up until far on towards the morning. But at length, unable longer to restrain the expression of her fears, Janet suddenly exclaimed,—

"Mary, do you ever think of the time when grandmother will be taken from you?"

Such an anticipation had never dwelt, and scarcely passed through Mary's mind; but now the likelihood of the event came upon her with its full force, and after a few moments' silence she answered,—

"Indeed, Janet, I cannot tell!—how desolate I should be! Quiet as I seem, I should never like to live alone. How I wish you could come and live with me!"

"That would be quite impossible," Janet replied; "but surely the Lord will provide: if Uncle John would come back, then we might all be happy!"

"Often I used to think," said Mary, "or at least try to think, that he was dead; but lately I have not felt as though he was. I dream about him constantly, but grandmother says we must not give heed to dreaming, for we generally dream of what we are anxious about. But then, Janet," she continued, "I fear he will not love me; he does not know what I am like, and if he cared about me, I think he would come back."

"Yes, Mary," Janet replied, "but you don't know what wicked people there are in the world; they may have made up some tale about your being dead, to keep him wherever he is. Grandmother says you are very like your mother, and at least you will believe that he loved her; however, we must wait and see."

"Yes," Mary answered, "I will wait; and try to

expect nothing; for some way, if I think about him at all, I get too restless to attend to anything properly; so I mean to give it quite up, enjoy grandmother while I have her, and when she is gone (and at this the bitter tears would fill her eyes) I must hope that God will provide some home for me."

"That is right, dear cousin," Janet added; "we had better never talk about him, but I can't help it sometimes;" and this resolution closed their long conversation.

Many an anxious thought had the consideration for Mary's future cost Nancy Walton, and many times had it taken her to her never-failing refuge; but at length she had received faith implicitly to confide her precious grandchild to the care of her heavenly Father, assured she would be provided for.

Her own little property must, at her death, be equally divided; all her cousins were in the way to maintain themselves, except the little invalid, and why not Mary, who had been well prepared for any moderate calling to which she was at all likely to be appointed?

Still it seemed almost hard that Ashton Cottage, that sweet, lovely place, which her father had laboured to bring into his family, should so soon go out again; and even Nancy Walton felt this a trial. There seemed at times, however, but little hope of rescue; she therefore sought strength to resign her wishes to Him who doeth all things well, and who kept her head above the waves of despair. "If I might just

see my poor son before I die, and know of his safety," she would say to herself, "then I could depart in peace;" but such doubts were often followed by some encouraging promise, which comforting her, she would afresh commit him to the grace which can seek as well as save the wanderers; turning even his heart, who (she did not doubt) had steeled himself against the friends God had left for his comfort. For so unreasonable a passion is revenge, that in endeavouring to retaliate on others, the fiercest darts return to those who aim them.

But Nancy, like her charges, felt it unsafe to indulge in speculative thoughts concerning her son; so when the rising tide of hopes and fears threatened to overwhelm her, she invariably made it a matter of principle to surmount both by personal activity and prayer, soon regaining her usual composure.

Her heart was so truly set on heavenly things; her home, a "house not made with hands;" her faith, that, if only in the eleventh hour, the wanderer would be brought to the fold, was in general so strong, that she could say for herself—"these things did not much move her," save now and then, when days of darkness would cross her path; but they were not frequent visitors, and her universal cheerfulness enlivened many.

The day after Janet's arrival, when the cousins had finished their domestic occupations, they carried Fanny's couch into the garden, and leaving her in

the good company of their kind grandmother, went themselves up to the village to call on their old friends. Miss Banks evinced no small pleasure at the meeting, and Ellen Warner, whom they found with their valued teacher, was equally delighted. The girls were just beginning to understand her true position, and to appreciate the carefulness with which she avoided any remarks detrimental to her father's character.

Ellen had now but another year to remain at home; her conduct and qualifications were already such as to make her residence in any family a great gain, and Mrs. Herbert looked forward with thankfulness to the time when she would reside at the Rectory.

There are many young people situated like Ellen, with some private family grief to weigh them down. Would that all acted as honourably as she did, by never reverting to what is better kept secret on the one hand; and as truthfully, by not attempting to conceal or give a wrong impression of their domestic state on the other; lest they should be subjects of pity, or be excluded from the great privilege of being esteemed objects of envy! Silence is generally the wisest course, but it requires much moral courage to remain so, when others are boasting of their various indulgences, as this implies that we have none.

It is painful to think of the bad passions one young person can excite in the mind of another. Would they but think more of One who was content to be

despised and rejected that He might serve them; who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; who took upon Him the form of a servant, and at last gave up His life a ransom for many; they would be reminded of their own immense difference from His condition, and how far they are removed from any fellowship with His sufferings. While those called upon to bear reproach and contempt might be sure of His constant sympathy and compassion, and His perfect ability to sustain His afflicted people.

Ellen was not without one earthly friend, to whom she could unfold her secret thoughts, and in this she was more than fortunate; for, although not actually needful, we know how much more lightly we can tread the thorny path after the encouraging word of some fellow Christian to whom we have confided our griefs; not in order to gratify their curiosity or our own murmuring spirit, but that we may "bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"—enjoy the privileges of fellowship and receive the fulfilment of the promise. "If two of you shall agree touching anything ye shall ask of the Father in my name, it shall be done unto you."

These were happy days to Janet, each morning bringing its own engagements, and each evening its hours of pleasant recreation. That summer being a warm one they almost lived out of doors, and one afternoon towards the end of August, the heat being intense, Janet and Mary had strolled to the river's bank in the hope of coolness, taking their sewing

with them. There they had been sitting for some time, when Mary, turning her head, saw Mr. Herbert approaching. Both rose to meet him and to receive his usual kind salutation, and soon they were reseated on the bank, their good pastor by them.

Always bearing in mind his home above, his conversation was so ordered as to remind others that their affections should be set on things above, thus making the things that are seen types of those which are invisible.

"Janet," he began, "of what does this river remind you?"

"Of the river of life, sir," she replied.

"Yes," Mr. Herbert continued, "and that river makes all glad who drink of it. How sweet it is to look upon this water, thinking of the fountain opened for 'sin and uncleanness,' and that none who taste of that shall ever die.

"Death came by sin; but 'Christ having appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,' has thus taken the sting from death. So all believers in this precious truth should be freed from a slavish dread of death; for however much the flesh may shrink from what in itself is awful, the promise is that even 'those may be delivered, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'"

"I sometimes think," Mary said humbly, "that I should like to die—at least when grandmother does."

"Yes, my dear girl," Mr. Herbert replied, "I

scarcely wonder at such a feeling; but it is not the language of faith: it is the poor soldier, weary of conflict and trouble, and crying for a truce before the victory is over. You have a better friend even than your excellent parent, who will remain with you when she is taken, for He can never be parted from you, here or hereafter, and you know not what work He may yet have for you to do. So rather try, dear Mary, to have no will in the matter, but, with full purpose of heart, dedicate yourself to the Lord's service. There is very much you may do in this village; and should it be God's will to remove you to another sphere, even there, if you are disposed to labour, there will be a vineyard wanting a labourer. How much happier we all might be if our hearts were fully set on the Lord, our eye, more really single, being fixed on Him; then earthly things and cares would have less power over us, not pressing us down, nor hindering us in the race. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil.' Why should we add to the sorrow of to-day, instead of taking no thought for the morrow? God is your heavenly Father, Mary, and be sure He will care for you—it is very blessed to feel your whole dependence is on Him. Hitherto you have had a fair and easy course; doubtless it will not always be so smooth, there may be both more sun and rain for you yet; but prosperity is worse for a child of God than adversity, and in either case at present you should be without carefulness. What can there be to dread in the future with such

a promise as this?—'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be.'"

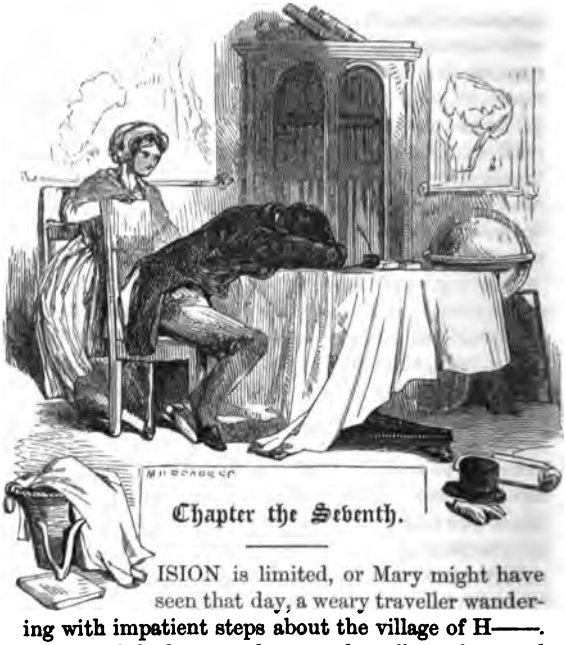
"But lately, sir," said Mary, "I have thought very anxiously about the future."

"Ah, Mary," her cousin could not help confessing, "it was I who first put such doubts and fears into your mind."

"It little signifies," Mr. Herbert added, "who or what is the cause of such suggestions; our duty is to silence them, to give no heed to them. All doubts come either from the father of lies or our own unbelieving hearts. But I hope Mary will soon get them under her feet, and not listen to the mournful forebodings even of her beloved cousin;" and smiling on her he continued, "As for you Janet, let your diligent prayer be, 'Lead us not into temptation.' Situated in a gay, though small city, and surrounded by peculiar circumstances, you have need of much grace, and grace is strength. Be careful to stifle the first return to worldliness. Now you feel as though the world were dead to you; but with such an enemy as ours it will not always be so. We are told to watch and pray, and you, dear girl, will have need for both. But remember, however great the power of evil, there is the stronger arm of your heavenly Father ever ready to rescue his tried or tempted lamb, and to establish your goings. He has already made you the means of blessing to others; walk as carefully and cautiously as you have hitherto done, recognising your own utter nothingness and the

power of the great Captain of Salvation, and you will do well. But now," he continued, "before we part, let us read the twenty-sixth Psalm, and then unite in prayer that our covenant God will take us all under His especial keeping."

When Janet and Mary reached the cottage they found their grandmother had gone to Miss Banks's for the evening, and Peggy was keeping Fanny company. It was a most unusual thing for Mrs. Walton to take tea from home, and Mary made many inquiries about her going. All the particulars Peggy could give were, that Miss Banks had come and almost insisted on Mrs. Walton returning with her; Peggy could not guess why, though she had been indulging in conjectures ever since she left, much to Fanny's amusement, who could not understand why it should be such a wonderful occurrence. But wonderful Mary knew it to be, and, although she said little, she felt considerably annoyed, and heartily wished to go after her; but as this was out of the question, she endeavoured to give herself up to the enjoyment of friends so congenial as her cousins were to her.



Chapter the Seventh.

VISION is limited, or Mary might have seen that day, a weary traveller wandering with impatient steps about the village of H——. His jaded look seemed more the effect of mental suffering than bodily labour; and yet, as we see him, the sun has broken out, and is shining brightly on his dark and furrowed brow, for his sorrows and wanderings are about to close.

He, too, had sat by the river, not far distant from

the place where Mary had been sitting; he had been reminded by it of many happy bygone days, and rejoiced to think of "the living fountain" and "the river of God," from which he had so lately learned to drink and live. The previous evening, when most of the villagers had sought their early repose, he drew nigh to the village; when a fresh difficulty presented itself. He had never thought of writing, or if he had it was scarcely less startling than appearing in person. His courage seemed altogether to fail him, and how to reveal himself at Ashton Cottage, the home of his childhood, he did not know. He felt to need an introduction, for he had made himself an alien. He thought over all his former friends; the rector he had left was now no more, and many others had slept the sleep of death since sixteen years ago.

But there was Miss Banks—the coachman told him she was living; so to her he resolved to go, and, late as it was, his trembling steps conveyed him into her presence.

She was at all times calm, and even in this emergency her self-possession did not fail her; and as she fixed her eyes intently on her visitor she quietly uttered the name of "John Walton!"

"Yes," he replied (thankful that the silence was broken), "it is no other. Now, may I hope Miss Banks is still my friend, willing to plead for the prodigal son?"

"Willing indeed," was that good woman's answer;

"but why remain a prodigal so long, when a mother's heart was longing to welcome you back, and a daughter to call you father?"

This was enough; John Walton laid his head down upon the table, weeping the bitter tears of true repentance, undisturbed by his judicious observer for some time.

"Am I then still beloved?" at length he faltered out.

"Have you," Miss Banks replied, "so far forgotten your mother as to question her faithful love and willingness to receive even you? But tell me, where have you been, and what has kept you so long away?"

"That, dear friend," he answered, "would take the night to tell you. Let us first conclude how I shall reveal myself to them, for my mother is old and I fear the consequences; but my child is young, shall I see her first? I must trust to you—a woman's head is clearer than a man's."

Miss Banks's head was always clear and acute in perceiving what was the right step to be taken in a difficulty, and she was at no loss now; after a few moments' consideration she said,—

"I should like you to see Mary in the cottage (her cousin is with her), and try if she does not at once recognise you, from your likeness to her grandmother. She has much self-command, and such an even temperament, that the surprise may do her more good than harm; but Mrs. Walton requires some consideration." After another pause, during

which the restless traveller was walking quickly up and down the room, she added: "I will get your mother here to tea to-morrow evening, and may the Lord give me wisdom gradually to impart the pleasing intelligence. In the meantime you go to Ashton Cottage without introduction, and see if the girls don't find you out." This seemed a good plan, and was, therefore, decided on; after which, Miss Banks gave a brief history of the family joys and sorrows, and the changes in the village. "And now," she said, "it is your turn to confess what powerful attraction has kept you from this peaceful valley. Did you find a better resting-place on the other side the ocean?"

"Alas, no!" he replied. "I find there is but one true resting-place,—the bosom of our reconciled heavenly Father. But I went far off from peace, wandering after other gods; determined to disbelieve in His protecting power and providence, who made heaven and earth. The cause of my going you know. Hither and thither I went, resolved, wherever I looked for happiness, it should never be to the God who had taken from me the desire of my heart and the light of my eyes. All this while, in mercy, He whom I hated was following me, 'with thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give me an expected end.' But to return. In the vessel in which I embarked were several clever, witty men. Wanting sympathy from none, however, I hid my sorrows and my bleeding heart beneath an aspect of gaiety, and soon w

became good friends; spending the tedious days in foolish conversation, and card-playing, which I soon learned. Gradually we became more intimate, and one night resolved to tell our histories. We were each to have an evening, and I was to begin. In spite of my heroic silence, I was glad at last to have my tongue unloosed, and varied my narrative with frequent comments on the tyranny of the Author of my afflictions. This gave the vent to my pent-up passions, and each hour, during my sad tale, they increased. But towards the end, conscience smote me; and seeing that I endeavoured to retract or unsay much that I had said, Wills, one of my companions, exclaimed,—

"'You are the fool to believe all these troubles were sent in love, are you? So people used to try to persuade me.'

"'No,' I replied, 'they were sent in judgment; but if we get to heaven, we shall not care about them.'

"'I should like to know,' said Wills, 'what proof they are that you will get to heaven; for my part, I don't want to go there, if the God that crosses all our plans is there: so you may just leave me behind when you take that journey, although at present I think you are as little fit for the place as I am.'

"His turn came the following evening; his story was, indeed, as sad as mine. Having been deceived in what he had fixed his heart and hopes upon, he now spent his days in misanthropic coldness towards the whole human race, and in cursing the God who

permitted the wound only that He might prove the infinite efficacy of His healing beams. Man cannot alter his circumstances; 'No man, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature.' Why, then, do they so perversely fret, and disquieting themselves in vain, go further and further from the 'fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness?'"

Vainly we attribute our misery to circumstances, our want of happiness to the inability and unwillingness of our Creator to make us happy. Sin, and not circumstances, is the worm which blasts our gourds; either destroying our earthly comforts, or our ability to enjoy those we have. These poor guilty sinners neither saw nor believed this truth; but denying the subject, the common sense with which they addressed themselves to every other, they continued blind and dark. Are any sick, they go to the physician; try first one plan, and then another, to remove their sufferings: but their mental maladies they cherish and aggravate, and instead of getting freed from them, resort to measures sure to increase their anguish. Yet all the while that they are rejecting redemption, and denying their need of it, they furnish the strongest of all proofs to their fallen and abject condition in the morbid misery to which they confess.

It were better to account our sorrows as sins than to say that we have no sin,—because then we may be renovated; whereas, in the other case, we deceive ourselves, and come under the title of the "whole

who need not the physician," and, therefore, must abide the final consequence of our disease; for the worst of all maladies is to think ourselves well.

"The third night Walters gave his amusing history; he was young, and his trials had not reached his heart. But how often words and actions bear little similarity to each other! and so it was with him: dependent on perpetual excitement, his present voyage was undertaken from a love of change, but constantly confessing the failure of every fresh circumstance; after commenting on the miseries of this life, he would often say,—'Well, we shall be better off in the next;' and with this, his favourite expression, he closed his history.

"'And how do you know that?' said a quiet, grave young man, who seldom left our company, and as seldom joined in our conversation, fixing his deep blue eyes steadfastly on Walters.

"'Know?' Walters repeated; 'why, I think we shall. I am sure man is not made to end his days in hell. God, who has given us this earth to enjoy while we are here, will surely give us something better for eternity; something we can enjoy a little more, at any rate.'

"'Indeed I should not like to rest my soul on so sandy a foundation, Walters,' Stafford replied. 'You cannot get one truth or argument about God except from the Bible; all else is problematical. Let the wisest heads be selected; set them to think and observe for years, and they can discover absolutely

nothing about the Author of their being independent of revelation; and all the while these wise men are under the necessity of believing much which they can neither reason nor explain.

"'Take, for instance, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and wherein is that more unlikely than the fresh clothing with which nature is covered on the return of spring? and so we might go on with a long list where man cannot explain, but only observe and wonder.

"'Therefore let revelation speak; and what does it say? That God is holy, and when He made man, it was in His own image He made him.

"'But man fell under the power of temptation; hence his whole family are sinners, because of the state in which Adam was when his sons were born. So now you have man removed from being very near, to a great distance from God, sin having become as much his nature as goodness was before; and even more so, because in Paradise he had the power to resist temptation, whereas now he is most easily overcome. Not only is his own heart the soil in which evil springs up like weeds, but he is also subjected to temptations from without.

"'Hence you have God and man widely separated, with the penalty attached to disobedience hanging over him, and that penalty is death.

"'How, then, is he to be convinced of his sin? which first thing he begins to palliate and excuse

for? and how is he to be reconciled? or must he remain an alien for ever?

"'The Bible says,—'By the law is the knowledge of sin;' and the law says,—'We must love God with all our heart, and soul, and strength.'

"'No man can be so utterly foolish and ignorant as to say, that from his birth he has done this; and God further accounts that man condemned who has broken His most holy law.

"'Happiness and holiness would be restored directly, if man could fulfil this law. Therefore he stands guilty, and no longer a stranger to his condition before God.

"'Then follows the question of his pardon. For God the Just to say, 'I pardon all without a ransom,' were to prove himself unjust, throwing away the reins of government altogether; and justice forbids such a line of action.

"'Yet no ransom short of blood can redeem, because blood, or life, was the price to be paid; for He says, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'

"'Where, then, was blood to be found of efficacy to atone for the sins of a world? Here comes the message,—'Deliver them from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.'

"'Therefore, in due time 'God was manifest in the flesh,' 'The Son of God appeared, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law,' by keeping it whole in His own person, and

in man's stead; when clothed with flesh He dwelt among men. Being both God and man, this made Him a fit offering on the altar of atonement. By dying, this perfect God-man paid the awful debt due to justice in consequence of sin, whether committed against the law of conscience, or mankind, or God; and, by rising, proved 'He had by death destroyed him who has the power of death;' that henceforward to all who believe in that sacrifice, the 'grave is vanquished, and death has lost his sting.'

"'This is what we call the Gospel; and where does the Gospel find you, and take you up?

"'Dead in trespasses and sins; drowned in fruitless, hopeless misery; and raises you to a near relationship, a perfect union, with the Lord of heaven and earth; with 'Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant,' and with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who dwells in the hearts of all believers.

"'Acquaint, then, yourselves with God, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto you.'"

"Here Stafford ceased, and we were silent. Wills curled his lip contemptuously; Walters was completely softened. For myself, I heard his words; I knew they were the words of truth and soberness; I longed to kneel down and confess my error and rebellion, but, stifling the conviction, from that night I became one of those 'who, knowing his master's will, did it not."

"The following week Wills was taken ill with fever; knowing too much not to fear death, Walters and I

gladly resigned him to Stafford's watchful care, who never left him night or day.

"Through the mercy of God he recovered; and when he rejoined us I quickly saw the wonderful change that had passed upon him. Nothing could have presented a greater contrast than his present and former character; instead of cold misanthropy and bitter sarcasm he seemed filled with benevolence, spending his days in acts of kindness and consideration for the comfort of others: even his countenance lost its supercilious expression, and became quite lovely. Poor fellow, he had not been reckoning for 'the swellings of Jordan' coming so swiftly to view; nor had he reflected where, if he absented himself from the presence of God, his soul would have to spend eternity, or that the truths he had scornfully rejected would so soon prove deeply interesting and unspeakably welcome.

"Strange to say, I avoided both him and Stafford. We left them at the Cape with Walters, and I went on alone; feeling like one self-doomed to destruction, I gave myself up unresistingly to be the slave of Satan.

"Our voyage, too, at last was ended, and in the other country I soon found congenial spirits ready 'to enter my house,' to strengthen me, and for me to strengthen, in unbelief and hardness of heart. Sometimes my thoughts reverted to my native village: I wondered if my child still lived, and if she was like my Mary; then came hard thoughts of

God, hardening the softer feelings of my nature. Three nights together, just about this time, in dreams I saw my little daughter lying dead before me; I thought them true, and, believing this was God's way of completing his judgments upon me, an influx of tenfold stronger resolves to curse Him came over me.

"Thus I wandered about, easily supporting myself, for about two years more; then, suddenly entering into an advantageous engagement for ten years, I diligently devoted body and mind to the business I had undertaken: so much so, that indifference and callousness took possession of me to a degree I could not have thought possible, and those ten weary years were passed with no enjoyment, and not much acute misery.

"The day our engagement ended I went over to the gentleman I served, who lived many miles distant; we were just about preparing another settlement for the same term, when a young lady, thinking Mr. Wenton was alone, entered the room.

"Seeing a stranger, she was quickly making her retreat, when her father called her back, saying, —

"'I am never too busy to bid you good night, my Mary.'

"The child came forward, threw her arms round her father's neck, and kissed him.

"It was enough; my proud unfatherly heart was broken, and, in spite of their presence, I gave myself up to the anguish I was enduring.

"When the girl had retired Mr. Wenton inquired most tenderly the cause of my grief. I told him all, every particular, and his interest was intense. He advised my returning home, but not until I should hear who there was to welcome me.

"This he engaged to ascertain through his friends in England, whom, he said, he would employ to get the information privately; and you may imagine how slowly that year passed: but the answer made up for all.

"'Where did he inquire?' asked Miss Banks, wondering she had never heard.

"'A friend of Mr. Wenton,' he continued, 'came himself to the Rectory, as I told him all information could be obtained there; but his call was not to be told to any one, and, doubtless, Mr. Herbert has never divulged it.'

"I then heard that our old rector was gone, and once to-day thought of appealing to your present minister; but an old face is better than a new one, so I concluded to come to you.

"But to continue. You may be sure I did not lose much time in preparing for the voyage; and hoping to resettle in my native land, I gathered together all the property which I had saved from my salary, and which amounted to a very nice sum, to bring here with me for my precious daughter.

"Not until I got home from Mr. Wenton's and back to my business came the full, clear view of my own backslidings, and a fearful awakening it was.

"I felt as though such sins as mine never could be pardoned—sins committed against light and knowledge. Not being ignorant of my long-neglected Bible, I searched it diligently for many weeks before the least ray of hope appeared, even though kind promises were on every page. At length I thought I had been guilty of the unpardonable sin, and almost resigned myself to despair; not then seeing, as I do now, that hardening the heart against the Holy Ghost, or, in other words, refusing to believe on that Saviour whom it is His office to reveal, is the only sin which the blood of Christ cannot pass over.

"In this state I remained for many weeks, when, one day opening at the first of Isaiah, and again at the tenth of Romans, all my doubts fled; for the words, 'It is finished,' came sweetly on my soul, as though they had been written especially for me. What could those words mean, but that the great work needful to secure our salvation was perfectly accomplished—that peace was made between man and God—that the new and living way was opened, through which all might pass clear from judgment who looked to the Lamb that had been slain bearing away the sins of the world?

"If of the world, then mine were surely included, and I was free!

"Brightly, then, I felt the beams of redeeming love resting on me, 'the chief of sinners!' So happy was I, that my anxiety about the intelligence I might receive concerning those I had so deeply injured

seemed bearable. I knew the great and tender Shepherd, the Father of the fatherless, and God of the widow, would infinitely more than have supplied my lack of service, and this was my consolation.

"Nevertheless it was a tedious year; but, thank God, it is over, and I am safe restored. O that the meeting were over too!"

Here words gave way to deep reflection, to sad and solemn musing on the past; both speaker and listener seemed unconscious how near they were to the approaching morning until the almost uninterrupted silence was broken by Miss Banks.

"You have indeed," she said, "tasted that it is an evil thing and bitter to depart from the living God; but His smile is on us now, therefore we will not give way to sadness. We shall both need strength for the morrow, however; so you shall rest your limbs on this sofa the little that remains of the night, as you must leave early and keep clear of the village until evening."

"That I will do patiently," her grateful friend replied; "meanwhile your prayers will ascend with mine that all may be well."

And soon after they parted, the day dawned on which so great an event was to happen in that quiet valley.

Chapter the Eighth.

BUT to return to Mary. Whether her anxiety about her grandmother's absence continued or not, she kept to her resolution; carried the tea into the garden, and under the shade of the great elm-tree the three young people had a merry tea-drinking.

Perhaps both Janet and Mary felt as though there was something uncommon afloat; perhaps they both hoped it might be news from a distant clime; but while they acknowledged being very nervous that evening, and could not quite explain their own feelings, neither of them ventured to hint to the other what they really suspected, lest the telling it should be met with the likely assurance that they had no reason for any such wild expectation.

Most persons will understand the vague uncertainty which takes possession of the mind when anything very unusual has occurred; how, before we hear the simple explanation, our hopes get on from one step to another, till they know no bounds, and the most improbable of circumstances seems about to be realised.

Such were the feelings of the cousins, although they would not have dared to confess them; and almost vain were their various efforts to settle down to quiet employment.

But Mary wisely proposed resorting to the blessed word of God, to which Janet gladly assented; and so soothing were its precious pages, it seemed in great measure to restore the readers; bringing them back to the unchanging and unchangeable Jehovah, and imparting to Mary, at least, the stable comfort those only have the power of receiving whose soul's anchor is fastened within the veil.

"Now, Janet," said Mary, as they were helping Fanny to prepare for bed, "I feel quite calm again,

as though nothing could come but what God appoints, and therefore must be good. I wonder whatever made me feel so restless; it was such a strange, unaccountable sensation!"

"Yes," Janet replied, "I think I felt the same: it may be the consequence of talking so much of grandmother leaving us. I am sure Mr. Herbert is right; it was want of faith that made me fear it, and want of faith made you take my remark so seriously: but I hope the worst is over, and that we shall not be so 'fearful and unbelieving' any more."

"Indeed, I hope not," added Mary. "And now, Fanny, dear," she continued, "are you comfortable? —does your poor back feel better for the soft bed?" Being assured of the comfort of the invalid, they went down stairs, and getting their work, sat in the cottage door to await the return of their beloved parent, little thinking that before she came, another relative would fold them both to his embrace: for so it was; the evening shadows were lengthening ere John Walton, with all his heart yearnings, could summon resolution to appear even in the presence of his child.

"Mary," said Janet, looking suddenly up from her work, "I wonder where Michael is; I have not seen him come home, but since we sat down I have heard the trees rustling several times, and just now I am sure I saw them shake."

"You are, indeed, nervous, Janet," her cousin

replied; "it must have been fancy, for I am as near to the trees as you are, and I have not noticed anything. Certainly you would never do to live alone!"

"Mr. Herbert said on Sunday, that the 'evil' a Christian should be entirely exempted from is 'fear;' but I think you are forgetting all the promises he read over, to look so pale because the trees are shaking. You can't trust in Michael this time, however, for Peggy told me he would not be home till late."

But, in spite of Mary's rebuke, Janet involuntarily drew her chair further from the doorway, trying to convince herself the air had become chill.

"Really, dear Janet," Mary said, kindly, who was watching her companion all the time, "you can't be well; do go and lie down on Fanny's couch; only I can't offer to come and sit by you, it is so dark on that side of the room, and I want to finish my work."

Janet took the advice of her placid-minded cousin; her soul had been ruffled too, but she had listened to the sweet notes of "Peace, be still," and that event must have been a great one which could again have unsettled her.

"And now," she continued, "I will sing grandmother's dear hymn, 'O God, our help in ages past,' to your favourite tune of 'Martyrdom.' If you can join, do; but if not, never mind: perhaps your spirit will enter into it."

"That I am sure it will," Janet replied, and Mary sang.

There are some characters in the world who, in the prospect of difficulties or seasons of suspense, exhibit so little endurance, that we naturally expect them to faint or fail when those difficulties come to be realized. But far otherwise the case proves; and those who seem ready to shrink from a shadow, stand the real storm and tempest the most unflinchingly; and so it was with Janet.

She had only been laid down a few moments, her eyes resting on the tranquil lane beyond the garden, her heart meanwhile following Mary's hymn (whose head was bent down over her work as she sang), when the figure of a man passed noiselessly through the gate, and stood at some distance from the door. The whole truth flashed over Janet's mind, before she had time to utter a word; she therefore remained unnoticed and perfectly still: well able to appreciate a father's love, she rejoiced to think how happy her uncle must be as he stood steadfastly gazing on his regained treasure. It was scarcely wonderful she should guess aright who the stranger was; his face, pale as death, bore so striking a resemblance to her own dear father's in his last quiet sleep.

When the hymn was finished, John Walton walked quickly up to his daughter, and had folded her to his breast in a transport of delight, before Mary knew

what had happened. Her head fell back upon his shoulder, and looking up, her eyes were met by such a gaze of deep affection as thrilled through her inmost soul.

"My own dear father!" were all the words of welcome she could falter, as, drawing herself closer to his warm embrace, the fast-falling tears relieved her heart, almost overburdened with the intensity of sudden joy.

"Yes, my Mary, my sweet child!" he replied, "it is your father; and you, my darling, how like you are to your dearest mother!"

At these words Janet could no longer keep silence; but rising from her retreat, she exclaimed,—

"And now, my cousin Mary, you believe he loves you."

It was John Walton's turn to be startled, for he imagined they were alone; but having been prepared for finding Janet there, he soon recollected himself, giving her the greeting of a kind and loving uncle.

"Now," Janet exclaimed, "we know it all! Some kind friend has been planning for us to-day; for here comes dear grandmother."

Mrs. Walton and Miss Banks then entered the cottage, the former having only in measure recovered from the exciting influence of the joyous intelligence. Miss Banks soon made an excuse for calling Mary up stairs; Janet was there already, busy dressing her sister, that she might partake in the general re-

joicing; and Mrs. Walton and her son were left alone: their joy and sorrow were too deep and sacred for any mortal eye to witness.

Ere long Mr. Herbert joined the happy party now assembled in the cottage. Nancy Walton occupied her usual seat, looking the picture of serenity; her last earthly wish had been granted, and her desire fulfilled; she had "fought the good fight of faith," had "laid hold on eternal life," and now she was resting after the victory, waiting full of joy and peace for further summons to put off mortality, and go from "works to rewards."

Her faithful friend and fellow-traveller, Miss Banks, was sitting by; her benevolent countenance beaming all over with smiles of satisfaction. Fanny had been carried down stairs, and Janet, with Peggy's help, was actively preparing some refreshment for all. Mary was exempted from serving that evening, and sat resting her head on her father's bosom, almost too happy to cease from weeping.

But there was to be nothing but brightness that night; for it was already so late that the moon had risen, and was casting her silver beams through the window, which, with the blazes from the rekindled fire, was all the light they needed.

This was a tide in Mary's history, indeed. As the evening advanced, and the dream became reality, her joy would have known no bounds, but for the fear that her cousin, cheerful as she seemed, might be

remembering one who could minister to her happiness no longer: but she was greatly comforted by her father, who, when the simple meal was ready, insisted on her occupying a seat beside him. Janet's thoughts were in truth reverting to the departed; but she was giving thanks in her own soul that her father had been safely housed, without causing his family any pain or anxiety, and before anguish and sorrow had engraved such deep furrows on his brow. She knew she had gained spiritually what she had lost temporally; and she wished not to recall him from the rest he was enjoying, for which she also waited. Her heart was at present true to the Lord, who had satisfied her desires. When in trouble He had been her very present help, and had become her salvation. His faithfulness and truth were her shield and buckler; and although again reminded of her defenceless condition as regarded an arm of flesh, she knew "in whom she trusted," even in Him who was that night guarding his poor lamb with especial care, and feeding her with the finest of the wheat, so that no secret jealousy, no want of faith for herself, hindered her unfeigned participation in Mary's bliss.

The wanderer had returned; and if there was not music and dancing, there was joy and thankfulness beaming in every face and ascending from every heart; even Mr. Herbert, their invaluable rector, departed from his general rule, and remained with them until long past midnight.

Chapter the Ninth.

GREAT was Mary's happiness, the following Sunday, as she and Janet walked to church behind her father, Mrs. Walton leaning on his arm; her many anxious thoughts at last were ended, and a full answer to her prayers was granted. His reflections,

too, were beyond description as he worshipped in his old place, which for so long had not known him.

When the service was over, in passing through the churchyard he halted under the shadow of one of the large trees, where lay the grave of his departed wife, again to read the inscription dictated by his mother, when he was prostrated with grief and disappointment. Mrs. Walton was before with Janet, and Mary lingered behind with her father, longing to ask him many things about her mother, whose ashes were sleeping so quietly beneath them.

The silence, however, was soon broken; and, drawing his daughter away, he said, "For one long year, dear Mary, my prayer for you has been that you may have grace to walk in the footsteps of your beloved mother. She adorned the doctrine of God her Saviour in all things; her daily life and conversation being begun and ended to the glory of God. But Janet will like to know more about her too; therefore, as I can speak calmly of her now, we will wait until evening, when I will endeavour to give you her history, although you may have heard much of it before."

"Grandmother and I have often spoken of her," Mary answered, "but I feel I never could hear enough. Is it not strange that, although I never knew her, I should love her so much, dear father?"

"You see how children do love their parents, Mary," her father replied; "and your mother has always been spoken of to you in terms of approval: so

strong is the natural bent to love those who gave us being, that the wonder would rather be if you did not love her."

The walk not being a long one, the party soon arrived at Ashton Cottage. Janet, being before, had placed their simple Sunday's dinner on the table, to which they all sat down. Then followed the afternoon service. The sermon was from the text, Deut. viii. 16, "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." Mr. Herbert was a faithful watchman, and neglecting no opportunity for turning circumstances to a good account, he dwelt particularly on the last clause, speaking like one who lived in the power of the truths he was enforcing on his hearers.

What a refreshing sight to a Christian is a village where the rector considers himself the true guardian of his flock! Mr. Herbert's predecessor was a benevolent and humane man; but, being devoid of true godliness, the few reforms he attempted were unsuccessful: for vain is the work of the labourer, except the Lord himself be the builder; and Mr. Watson knew not the Lord; so how should any blessing rest upon his works? Such were John Walton's thoughts as he contrasted the present and former condition of the picturesque village of H——. Even Ashton Cottage, always a pattern for neatness and order, seemed to him to have shared

in the general good. For when the eyes are once opened to see the unspeakable value of religion, the world wears a different aspect; trial loses much of its power to crush beneath its heavy tread; while prosperity cannot intoxicate to the same extent, and therefore is not followed by the miserable, morbid reaction of uncertain languor.

When the day was beginning to wane, in consideration to Mrs. Walton and Fanny it was deemed prudent to forsake the garden for the large cottage-room, where the happy company were soon assembled. Janet and Mary became engaged in their own conversation; their grandmother had taken her accustomed seat by Fanny; John Walton had been sitting for some time in silent abstraction; and as his thoughts reverted to the past, his heart glowed with thankfulness for that great mercy he had only so lately learned to realise, the prospect of being reunited with his departed wife in an eternity of bliss. Many, her superiors, had esteemed him a believer; and it was on the faith of this that she had consented to their union, the discovery of his real state being only made at her death, when his conduct too plainly exhibited his lifeless hold upon "the Rock of Ages." At length, raising his head, and seeing them all look so settled, he began,—

"Now I will fulfil my promise, and tell you something of one who is now a saint in heaven. We stood by her grave this morning, Mary; bnt I have just been fully realising that her spirit is not there,

but in the presence of God, which brings most precious peace to the bereaved: our loss is her great gain; and we have a well-grounded hope that we shall ere long meet to be no more parted for ever.

"My uncle Turner owned the Weston Farm, which you all know. He had two sons and three daughters, and my Mary was the youngest child.

"Of my aunt I remember but little, for we did not often go there when we were boys, on account of the general disorder of the family. She died when I was about sixteen and Mary twelve; when Kate, the eldest daughter, undertook the management of the house. My uncle's habits were so intemperate that people often prophesied he would some day kill himself; but having a strong constitution, he bore what would have destroyed the life of many.

"My cousin Kate was a clever, high-spirited girl, almost devoid of any principle, and Jane was just whatever Kate chose she should; if possible, with a greater disposition for frivolity.

"Under the superintendence of Kate Turner the family lived for three years, when their father's sister, Mrs. Warren, came to stay with them; and this aunt was the first person towards whom Mary felt able to indulge the love she had entertained for her mother.

"Mrs. Warren's post was by no means an easy one; but as her brother and nephews so strongly urged her remaining, she felt it was her duty at least to endeavour to bring the family to a state of mo

order and discipline, even though all her efforts were opposed by Kate, who treated her as an usurper.

"Mary understood and entered into all her aunt's feelings; and young as she was, the deepest love and friendship sprung up between them. Mrs. Warren's husband being in the navy, and having no children to claim her attention, several months in the year were at her own disposal; she therefore came now and then, as it were, to keep the family from utter ruin, but she could not live there altogether.

"You will, doubtless, by this time have concluded that she was a Christian, which in truth she was, recommending and adorning the doctrines she professed.

"Not long before my aunt's death, Mrs. Warren had paid one of her kind visits to the farm, staying several months. This visit had been a highly-favoured one; for her sister-in-law and youngest niece then declared themselves among the number of those who know and serve the Lord; and this blessed circumstance encouraged that patient labourer to trust on, 'not weary in well doing, assured that in due time she should reap, if she fainted not.'

"Leaving them, she went on her way rejoicing; little thinking how soon the shock of corn would be gathered into the barn. But the message of salvation was just in time; and Mary was left behind to 'walk by faith and not by sight.'

"She was the by-word of her sisters, who poured on her all manner of contempt; but being girt with the armour wherewith the Lord had clothed her, she patiently 'endured the contradiction of sinners against herself.'

"It was not until she was seventeen years of age that I became really acquainted with her; and then, on one of Mrs. Warren's visits, my mother consented to my going also. Her forbearance and meekness in the midst of rebuke perfectly astonished me; she was so 'meek and lowly,' I thought it impossible to know her without being improved, and accordingly I became externally an altered man. Feeling as though her graces must be infectious, I thought I should partake of them; esteeming it an honour to be reproached by her sisters for her sake, both Mary and I thought it was the reproach of Christ I was so willing to endure. Well may it be said of the human heart, that it is 'deceitful above all things,' as well as 'desperately wicked.'

"The family, however, had been rapidly going down for many years; even Mrs. Warren's influence could not save them from the evil effects of my uncle's intemperate habits: the sons were often tempted to go to America, where a cousin of theirs had emigrated and urged their joining him; but they talked of it long before they carried out the plan.

"When their aunt's visits, however, became less frequent, and their home consequently more miser-

able, and having invited Mary to accompany them, they began to feel they had not much that they cared to leave.

"I was then almost a constant visitor at the farm; and one night, about ten years after the death of their mother, I was sitting with Mary and her brothers in the field; we had been talking of their future prospects, and watching the beautiful harvest-moon which had risen, when we heard a sudden cry of horror, the merriment which was going on near the house ceased, and we were in the greatest alarm as to what could have happened.

"The sad tale was quickly unravelled; my poor uncle had met with an accident while in a state of intoxication, and was brought home dead!

"The house was filled with mourning, for all the comforters were dumb; Mrs. Warren was soon there again, and, for a time, all seemed solemnized. I wept with the rest, although, I grieve to own it, the fact that an obstacle to my obtaining Mary was removed, almost tempted me to rejoice. She had been the constant mark for her sisters' arrows, and nothing but the 'grace of God' could have enabled her to bear such unceasing trials so meekly.

"Sometimes she had raised my hopes, and then again, the thought of leaving her father and brothers, whose sole comfort she was, seemed unbearable: she felt her duty was at home; and knowing there could be but little peace in choosing to herself an easier path, she continued to endure.

"My uncle's death, however, brought things to a close, it being soon discovered that there was nothing wherewith to carry on the business of the farm; this decided my cousins on leaving the country when the affairs could be wound up. In spite of the undutiful conduct of their two elder sisters, Tom and Edward treated them with every consideration; but their suggestions and interest were received by Kate with nothing better than contempt, both seeming more than ever determined to follow their own devices.

"I then again ventured to plead the faithful love I had so long cherished for Mary; and to entreat that she would become my wife, assuring her of what I hoped to be true, that my wish was to live like one who was an 'heir of the kingdom of heaven!' I think she must have had some doubts about me, but she never expressed them; for although she returned my love with all the ardour of her affectionate nature, she appeared to think her duty was to accompany her brothers; and when I urged upon her the dangers of such a path, with the probability of her brothers' marrying themselves, she still did not yield.

"Only a few weeks after the sad event, Kate engage herself to a man, who, in spite of her temper, was most anxious to obtain her: being very handsome, to those not well acquainted with her she could put on an appearance of great amiability; so that he was completely captivated. And about the same

time Mrs. Warren and Mary were favoured with a great blessing in the entire change of Jane's character. Her father's death had been an awful shock to her, bringing powerfully before her the realities of life, and the importance of preparing for the account all must give of themselves before the judgment-seat of Christ. To Kate she had always looked up; but the fact of her having accepted a most weak-minded man, simply because he was possessed of what, to them, seemed wealth, totally deprived her of her former feeling of dependence, opening her eyes to see that beauty and a high spirit do not stand in the stead of sense and wisdom; and thus a great obstacle to her progress was quickly removed.

"The change was so manifest, that her brothers were delighted; bitterly feeling that 'the time past of her life might suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,' a more consistent Christian I never saw, for one so young in grace, so practised in sin.

"And now, I thought, surely I might venture to hope; for why should not Jane, who wanted a home, go with Tom and Edward, and Mary remain in England? Or, if not, I had resolved to go with them.

"This plan I proposed to Mary, and was delighted to find she almost approved it; and soon after, without my interference, the brothers offering to take Jane, the question was finally settled.

"So, at last, I had the prospect of gaining what had, for such a length of time, been the source of

varied hopes and fears; and I did not doubt I was going to be perfectly happy. But so perverse is man, that prosperity generally increases the cold indifference of his heart toward the Author of all his mercies; and accordingly I contented myself with joining in Mary's praises and thanksgiving: because she was thankful, I was so too. All my religion was bound up in her; when she was taken, it was gone: whereas hers was a constant and abiding principle and spring of action—a walk and life of faith. How quickly that year sped away in which I called her mine, you may more easily imagine than I can describe: to me she seemed almost perfect; and no wonder, for, although I little knew it, she was being 'made meet to be a partaker with the saints in light.'

"I scarcely know whether my love or respect for her were the greater; and when my heart would find relief in words of commendation, her gentle but firm rebuke would silence me as she answered, 'Remember, John, the rock from whence I was hewn; if you had known me before I knew the Lord, you would ascribe to Him all the glory.'

"From my inmost soul I bless the Lord that I have ever known her, and doubly bless Him that I knew her so well, and that I possess another 'Mary Walton' in my daughter. Doubtless, you are wishing that you, too, had known her, in order that you might follow her example: but, sweet as is her memory, you are not at a loss for a pattern. But

think more of the blessed Jesus, whose example we have laid down for us to follow; remembering that it was in yielding herself to be conformed to His image that your mother became what she was. Let us, therefore, daily think of her, as 'resting from her labours, assured her works have followed her;' and may this thought urge us on to be good soldiers of the cross."

Chapter the Tenth.

ALL who had the privilege of Nancy Walton's friendship loved and revered her in no ordinary manner. The varied dispensations of life had so turned to her sanctification, that the many years' discipline and exercise of faith and patience had brought to rare perfection the growth of grace within her soul; she was

assuredly a vessel containing much grace, a lamp kept well supplied with oil, and in no danger of going out.

Since the consummation of her earnest desires, her bodily strength had lessened day by day, instead of regaining what it had lost during the previous year, as might have been anticipated. The truth was, that her work was accomplished, and there seemed now no reason why she should not take wing. Sunday's exertion had been too much for her, quickening the footsteps of the rapidly-advancing failure. But though the light in her eye was dimmed, and her face, always lovely, was pale and emaciated, her conversation and spirits had become brighter than ever.

And why should we wish to detain her?—though willing to stay, she knew that to depart would be far better; the Lord having sent a guardian for her grandchild, her services were no longer needed. She had lived beyond the common span; and should she yet remain a pilgrim, with increasing age must come increasing infirmities: then might follow that humiliating stage of being, when childhood creeping over us again, our life becomes a burden to ourselves and to all that are about us.

So thought Nancy Walton on Monday morning, as, realising her own physical weakness and inability to join in the labours she was, with her still clear head, assigning to others, she felt content to sit by Fanny, thankful to have such willing helpers. Her

indisposition was, however, greater even than she allowed herself to think it; but anxious for her son to manifest his interest in his brother's family, she had only enjoyed his regained society a few days, ere she suggested his visiting C——, and proposed the following day for the journey. As the time drew nigh she felt tempted to detain him, but yielding not to her inclination, she concealed from others the gathering symptoms of approaching illness.

In consideration to her declining state, it had been concluded for Fanny to accompany her uncle, as her mother feared she might require much attention, which Janet and Mary could otherwise give undividedly to their grandmother.

That Monday was a busy day for the girls; not only had they to prepare the travellers, but also to assist Miss Banks, who, having given up her school at the vacation, was removing into that part of the cottage Michael and Peggy had inhabited, for Mr. Standing's lodge had been given to them. Mary and Janet might, under other circumstances, have feared being left in charge of their grandmother, but with their friend so near, no anxious thoughts crossed their young minds; for they little knew what was before them.

How wisely and mercifully is the future hidden from our view! how well it is we know not what may be on the morrow! Faith is not always so bright as to inspire us with confidence, that He who casteth the lot into the lap is merciful and gracious;

that He who doeth all things well will surely supply our need. But hope preponderates in the minds of the young; accordingly, the girls entered very merrily into their occupations, and by tea-time, as Mrs. Walton had requested, all was in readiness for the journey. Miss Banks was comfortably located in her new abode, and Michael and Peggy had gone to theirs a few hundred yards distant; for those who are not cumbered with much of this world's goods can easily remove what they have at very short notice.

The last evening, therefore, came which that unbroken party had to spend together; but they knew it not; and so great was Nancy Walton's placid cheerfulness, that it infused itself into the minds of all: even Fanny often forgot how nigh at hand the parting was, contributing her share to the general enjoyment.

No plans had at present been formed for John Walton's future occupation; but hearing that the office of schoolmaster would soon be vacant, he felt disposed to offer his services, but hesitated in order to allow time for the full consideration of the subject. On this account, likewise, it seemed desirable his visit to C—— should not be postponed; although on his part it was undertaken with much reluctance. Miss Banks greatly wished Janet and Mary to have joined her at tea in her new abode; but as their grandmother seemed unwilling to part with them, the invitation was declined, and she promised to

spend part of the evening with them; coming in, in time for their early family worship.

The day after her son's return, Nancy Walton had handed over the Bible to him, preferring to take the part of a listener. This evening, when it was laid on the table, she proposed his reading the 90th and 91st Psalms; selecting the hymn, also, which proved to be that outbreathing of a soul that knows the care of the tender Shepherd:—

"Through the day thy love has spared us,
  Wearied we lie down to rest;
Through the silent watches guard us,
  Let no foe our peace molest:
Jesus, thou our Guardian be,
Sweet it is to trust in thee.

Pilgrims here on earth, and strangers
  Dwelling in the midst of foes,
Us and ours preserve from dangers,
  In thine arms may we repose;
And when life's short day is past,
Rest with thee in heaven at last."

When a beloved relative or friend has taken her flight, how many circumstances we can recall, which seem to indicate she had some knowledge of her journey being almost completed. Some peculiar tenderness of manner, or anxiety about her welfare, or peculiarly clear views of passages from the word of God, come over us when they are gone, but which, though they astonished us at the time, we scarcely attempted to explain even to ourselves. None of the

party were that evening struck with Nancy Walton's minute planning for all, so as to wonder if the change were portentous of an event they knew, from her age, could not be far distant, although that knowledge did not cause them to realise it more. But all felt it a very solemn and blessed season of spiritual refreshment, and longed for its impressions to remain with them; for, sad it is, that while in these tabernacles of clay, our hours of happy intercourse with God are not so frequent or constant as they might be, if we more habitually dwelt near the throne of grace, and, seeking not to mingle the service of the world with that of Christ, kept our eyes more steadily fixed on the mercy-seat where Christ is interceding for his people.

The travellers left H—— in the afternoon of the following day; Janet and Mary had been with them to the village to meet the coach, had shed the tears which are the general accompaniments of parting, and were returning to their grandmother, when Mary began:—

"What a wonderful week this has been, Janet! It is only seven days since we sat on the river's bank together, and Mr. Herbert told me prosperity was more dangerous than adversity. I was surprised he thought it needful to give me such a warning, for I felt then so sad and foreboding; but he knew my father was likely to return some time, and that very night he came. How I delight to close

my eyes and think of that precious hour! You have been a kind cousin to me, Janet, but I fear you rejoice in my joys more than I do in yours."

"The return of the prodigal," Janet replied, "should make all glad; but remember, Mary, there are very few such joys as you had that night. It cost you many years of waiting, and what must it have cost grandmother? You think it makes up for all however now, don't you?"

"Indeed I do," returned Mary, "and far more; we ought to have more faith and patience about every thing."

"Only think," Janet exclaimed, "what a happy week we shall have with dear grandmother!—we will take good care of her. But, Mary, I overheard Miss Banks and Ellen Warner talking about her, and saying she was declining faster than any one thought. *I* don't think she is; for, although she can't bear much exertion, she is a good age now, and we must not expect it. But what do you think, dear cousin?"

"I am very sure," Mary replied, "we shall have to part with her soon; but I dare say she will have a long illness first, and we shall nurse her, Janet. Until she is worse I *think* we need not fear."

Endeavouring to dry their tears and look cheerful again, they thus strengthened each other to hope that what they acknowledged to be near was very distant, and with that resolution reached the house.

Mrs. Walton's chief concern for by far the greater part of her life had been to make those about her

happy, and now that her work was almost done she strenuously avoided all reference to the coming change. Having the unspeakable consolation of knowing that those most intimately concerned would find strength equal to their day when the trial came, she would not willingly have dimmed the light of a single hour by reminding them of the dark shadows which are common events in the lives of all. For herself, she had "laid help on One who is mighty," and felt his strong arm firmly grasping his weary sheep; and when Miss Banks had revealed her own convictions they were met by a placid smile of response, and a request that her grandchildren might be allowed to enjoy the few remaining days or weeks without their anxieties on her behalf being awakened.

During their absence, however, the village doctor had called, and corroborated the fears of her watchful friend. A prevailing epidemic had seized Mrs. Walton; one which so often proves fatal when it attacks the aged. Nevertheless, as no *immediate* danger was apprehended, Miss Banks could not but feel somewhat relieved; and when the girls arrived at home, they found their grandmother waiting for them in the cottage door: she kissed them both affectionately, and making many inquiries with great cheerfulness, to their inexperienced minds a ground was given for hope, and their spirits rose accordingly.

But soon the tide was turned. Two days had

passed in much quiet enjoyment of their grandmother's valuable society, her nights meanwhile becoming almost sleepless; when, on the third day, the medical attendant expressed his fears that the symptoms of his patient were beyond the reach of medicine, for nature was exhausted, without any power of rallying.

The girls were taking tea together down stairs, when Mr. Herbert, walking in, threatened to disturb them; hearing of Mrs. Walton's illness, he had soon found his way to the cottage, and after some conversation with Miss Banks he walked up stairs.

His inquiries were made with great interest and tenderness; he quickly saw the state of things, and after some moments' pause he continued,—

"I came this evening, partly on business, and as our time may be short, perhaps I had better proceed. May I ask if your son has any fixed plan for the future disposal of his time? He has himself told me his means are such as to require but little addition, and therefore his first desire is to be in a sphere of usefulness, however humble."

"He has not yet had any path made plain to him," Nancy Walton replied. "One has been suggested; but he felt disposed to wait the Lord's leadings before mentioning it to you: perhaps you may have thought of the same."

"The only opening I at present see," Mr. Herbert continued, "is the office of master to our school; a most important calling, though the remuneration is

but small: but in order to secure his services I would willingly make some addition from my own resources."

"That we should never allow you to do," Mrs. Walton said quickly; "nor is there any necessity for it. In pecuniary matters he will be easily satisfied, and he is not without experience in tuition, as you know, from having taught that school himself for one year when he was young; and during his residence in Australia, though merely for occupation, he took considerable pains with the youths over whom he was placed. As Burton does not leave for three months, he can gain much by daily attendance at the school during that time."

"Although other qualifications are indispensable," Mr. Herbert replied, "my first consideration is to obtain as master a man who, knowing the truths of the Bible by heartfelt experience, can speak of them with lively energy, and not as mere lessons. Hitherto we have not been fortunate, and have had too many changes; I wish we may get settled now. I will mention it to him on his return, and in the mean time I shall take no further steps. Your son may be a great help to me: indeed, I feel to have had a great gain in his return." Mrs. Walton's eyes were filled with tears of joy at the prospect of the poor wanderer being thus not only restored to the fold, but permitted to serve also; her cup of blessing was full, the "wilderness and solitary place were glad; and the desert had rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." Her

pastor and grandchildren sympathized in her unspoken gratitude; for Janet and Mary had followed Mr. Herbert up stairs. He seemed reluctant to leave; and lingered in the cottage to view so beautiful an instance of a Christian pilgrim on the verge of entering the promised rest; as, struck with her wasted form and increasing pallor, he quoted those precious texts in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "'We that have believed, do enter into rest, but there remaineth a further and more complete rest for the children of God.' You, my friend, are almost walking by sight now; faith has been crowned with such full fruition."

"It has, indeed," she replied, "and I long to fall asleep. I hope I am not impatient: but I feel the warfare is accomplished, that my mission is fulfilled, and I am ready to depart."

"But it is not having been a good soldier, or having fulfilled your mission, that gives you comfort now?" Mr. Herbert inquired.

"No, indeed!" she answered; "it is all of grace! Sin had separated between me and God; but Christ my ransom having died, we are reconciled. He is the 'Brazen Serpent' to me; his blood, which 'speaketh better things than that of Abel,' gives me all the peace I ever had; He is all my salvation and all my desire."

"I often feel very thankful," Mr. Herbert replied, "that the plan of salvation is comprehended in so few words; we see the mercifulness of this kind and

wise arrangement when the prospect of death is near."

"Yes," returned Mrs. Walton, "and we shall all soon see and know the mercy of every arrangement, which at present we understand little of; but even here we have the assurance that our heavenly Father is at the helm, and will so order for us as to secure his glory; and his greatest glory is to win back fallen man to his love, restoring him to his own image."

Janet and Mary had been listening attentively to the whole conversation, not venturing to interrupt it even with the indulgence of their deep sorrow, now the dreaded trial was pronounced close at hand. But they had kept silence as long as nature would permit; and their grandmother, having fixed her eyes upon them, when making her last remark, the painful restraint was broken, and their sufferings revealed. She had thus unpremeditatedly herself given them the warning; it seemed the right time, so she withheld it not, although it came upon them with all the suddenness of a flash of lightning.

"When does your son return?" Mr. Herbert inquired, thinking it time he should be there.

"Our doctor has written to secure his being here to-morrow," Mrs. Walton replied. "I feel I have not much longer to live, so I shall be very glad to see him. Miss Banks will remain with me to-night as usual; and to-morrow evening, if he has arrived, it would be pleasant if you could administer the com-

munion to us all together: the only addition I should wish to make will be Mrs. Warner and her daughter."

The engagement was therefore made, and Mr. Herbert took his departure, stopping at the gate to make some inquiries of Miss Banks; then turning to Mary, who was weeping by his side, he said,—

"You are in great trouble, my poor Mary; how quickly in this vale sorrow chases joy! Doubtless you find it hard to be resigned; to acknowledge your grandmother's work is accomplished. But try to think, dear girl, of her age, and what must follow if her life were spared; and rather give glory to that God who has appointed her just the number of years in which her existence is a source of pleasure and comfort, and when the grasshopper has become a burden, he calls her to his rest above. And may such a merciful disposition of events be ours!"

Almost all must know what it is to watch over near and dear relations on the verge of the grave; how we turn anxiously toward the loved one, in hope of ministering to her wants; and then quickly away to conceal the starting tears. So felt Miss Banks, Janet, and Mary, during that weary night, as they sat and longed for the morning, they scarcely knew why. Morning came, bringing only the increase of disease and the decrease of strength, and the day dragged slowly on.

At four o'clock on Saturday, John Walton arrived, partially prepared for the event which awaited him. Mr. Herbert and the Warners soon joined them;

the bread and wine were placed upon the table in that quiet chamber, the company were arranged, and Mr. Herbert commenced reading.

Mrs. Walton's mind had occasionally wandered during the day; but, becoming perfectly calm, she responded fervently to the petitions, and, from a full heart, joined in the thanksgivings; showing how fully she partook in the service. Her voice, though faint, was clearer than the rest—tears almost drowning theirs. John Walton, with his niece and daughter, knelt on one side of the bed, their eyes fixed on the beautiful countenance of the dying saint: her life's long warfare was about to close, in which, though she had tasted of the cup of sorrow, its bitterness had been made sweet: for well she knew a mansion was prepared for her where her Lord and Master had gone before, and that he was waiting "to minister to her an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of her Saviour Jesus Christ."

And surely, through whatever mazes any of the number there assembled had in after years to pass, the scene of that evening would remain with them, as the memory of a still and peaceful lake, reminding them of the gracious invitation: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The morning sun shone brightly on that window, but the closed blind kept out his warm rays; all was still and quiet, the pains of death were past; the watchers had gone to seek the repose they needed,

and the earthly tabernacle lay in its last sleep, for the "spirit had returned unto God who gave it."

The following Sunday was the day for celebrating the Lord's dying love; John Walton, with his niece and daughter, bent low to receive the bread and wine; and bowing their spirits to the will of that God who gave and had taken away, from their inmost souls they blessed His holy name.

Reader! hast thou, too, a well-spring of gladness in thy soul? Hast thou tasted of the wells of salvation? Art thou "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?" Has the blood of Christ spoken to thy soul of sin put away?

If not, then turn to thy neglected Bible,—it will reason with thee of "judgment to come;" judgment which, fly where thou wilt, thou canst not escape. It will tell thee, too, of One who is even now in the presence of God, interceding for all who are willing to come unto Him that they may have life.

Trust, then, entirely to Him, and thou art safe; He will cover thy head in the day of battle, and secure thy victory.

But if, indeed, thou dost already know Him, then hold Him closer and closer to thee; let no consideration whatsoever part thee from Him. Diligently serve thy day and generation, and try not to serve two masters. Remember the world is crucified to thee, and thou unto the world; therefore, let thine eye be single, steadily fixed upon the glory that sur-

rounds the throne. This will bear thy head above the many breakers, so that thou sink not, nor be discouraged, nor faint in the conflict before the warfare is ended, when thy Lord and Master will greet thee with the welcome commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE END.

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